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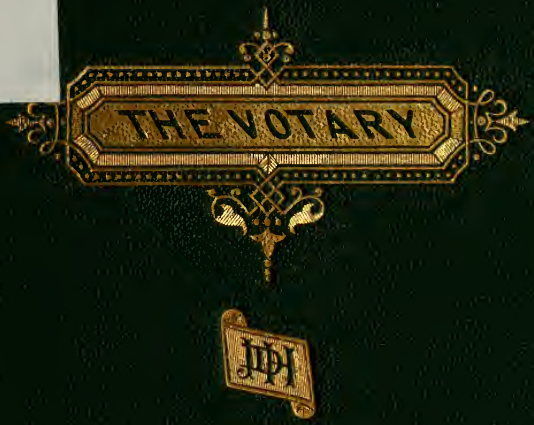

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THE

VOTARY.

A NARRATIVE POEM.

BY

JAMES D. HEWETT.

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L'ENVOI.

A ROYAL poem rises like the sun
In aureate halo on a roseate dawn;
Grows grandly upward, brightening at each step,
Till in mid-heaven in full blazé it swings,
And shaketh loose its streaming, burnished locks;
Then mellows richly down the coast of noon,
And splendors to a golden sunset crown.

But there are lesser planets than the sun.
The fair moon follows with a tenderer sheen;
And, when she sinks in silver shine from sight,
The cresset stars with diamond sparkle stay.
World, heed the flicker of a single ray!

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THE VOTARY.

I.

Retiring Eve with beckoning finger signed
To Night, her sister, mantled for her throne,
Who in the East's dim portals waiting stood;
Then, gathering to her breast her shadowy robes,
Withdrew within the russet drapery
Of her august pavilion in the West.
Night paced with soundless feet up to her seat,
And lingering light, before her routed, fled.
Her star-shot veil, flung loose, swept floating far
From her swart brow, and trailed like sable fleece
Round her tenebrious feet: the fair full moon
Glowed in her dusky zone, outshining all
The shivering splendors of her coronet,
Like one resplendent pearl, by her caprice
Set in the girdle of an Orient Queen,
Arrayed in state to hold her evening court.
Her children followed her, — the twain she bore
To silence at one birth, — blue-lidded Sleep,

Eager to nestle in the slumbrous depths
Of drowsy eyes, and languid-limbed Repose.
Soon flocks of rosy dreams came drifting down
Bright streams of moonlight, till they reached the earth,
Then rose on gossamer wings and darted through
The brains of slumberers; and, before they flew
Away to others, hung a breath above,
Thrilled with delight to watch the blissful smiles
Their visions had awoke on dreamers' lips.

Midsummer's radiant arms now clasped the bowers,
And in her warm embrace they brightly blushed.
Like a rich crust of jewels on the sward,
The night-dew in the elfin moonlight flashed;
Or rained in tremulous splendor from the flowers,
And filled the air with spray of quivering light,
As in Golconda's richest, secret cave
The restless hearts of diamonds burst in fire.
The cricket ticked his little night-watch clear,
And on the calm, deep breathing of the grove
The call of wandering night-birds sharply smote.
These mingled with faint, dreamy murmurs of
Some fair, fond rose, who, when the wanton breeze,
Uplifting from her eyes the rosy lids,
Toyed with her charms, in sleep lisped dreamily
Unto her lover.

Nature grew composed,
And stilled, and calm, before Night's solemn mien;
And the mad pulse of life and passion slacked
Its turbulent ecstasy to measured beat;

Save where, perchance, in some retired, sweet nook,
Pairs of fond lovers strayed in dreamy mood, —
With arms linked tenderly in close caress,
And lips on which more kisses sweetened than
Stars brightened in the heavens, — prodigal
Of honeyed love-talk, solemnized by vows;
And Night, to lovers' freaks indulgent, heard
Without rebuke the secret of their flame:
Or where wild schemers, mad for gold, revolved
Their stratagems to rob the treasured earth:
Or the rapt student delved for precious lore, —
His brow rimmed with a thoughtful glory pale, —
For golden truth, puissant, priceless more
Than all the rich-ored earth's occulted hoards:
Or poet dreamers, frenzied with delight,
Burned with the inspiration of the night,
And knew great joy in their fantastic myths.
Such rapturists filch ever night's mid-hours
From sleep, by an o'ermastering passion ruled,
While slumber's tide with gentle ripple beats
And surges in the breasts of half the world.

With fitful step, across a verdurous lawn
Close venueing a dwelling, paced a youth.
His face was damp with the sweet dews of night,
And crossed with lines of musing, while his eyes
Were hazy with thick clouds of revery,
As twilight seas asleep in amber mist.
His gait, which faltered now as if regret
And sadness spread their languor through his limbs,

Now broke out into fierce and eager strides
When stirring thoughts flamed up ablaze within.
As morn of summer was his aspect fair;
But, as wiseacres of a genial dawn
Predict the fervid heats of burning noon,
So those in men, as these in weather, wise,
Had augured from the shifting, ominous gleams,
That flashed, like smothered fire, athwart his eyes,
The high heat of a fierce, ambitious noon.
At last, half wearied by the tumult of
Conflicting thoughts, he cast himself upon
A mossy, rustic bench, 'neath clustered arch
And leafy, blossomed garlands drooping thick,
And voiced his bosom's theme in stormy wise: —

"To-morrow, goal of all the hopes and dreams
Of all my youth, toward which my soul hath reached
With hungry arms, seal of my manhood, ay!
Th' initial day of my soul's darling work,
With which my fate rides freighted, a new launch, —
At last I've toiled up to thee through my youth,
And stand alone and joyful on the beach
Whereon my manhood's surging billows beat.
Far o'er that stormy sea, Fame dwells apart,
And he must bravely cruise, and dauntlessly,
Battling with adverse winds and currents, who
Would moor his bark upon her golden strand.
But still the heart says, 'Ah! this parting pang!'
And love's delicious accents sigh, 'Remain!'
Where is thy sneer, strong soul, for the weak heart

Who, coward, shrinketh to weigh anchor for
The voyage that shall land me on Fame's shores!
An ancient faith of past heroic days
Converted heroes, when they went from earth,
To shining planets in yon glorious spheres;
While meaner souls it drove away in herds,
To strew with golden dust the milky way.
Great ones of eld drew from their mothers' breasts,
Methinks, with milk, immortal precepts, thus:
'So strive, my nursling, that thy soul may blaze
A fixed star in the solitude of space,
And not be merged in that dim multitude
Of specks that complicate the milky way.
Aspire, my babe, to set thy name upon
Fame's blazoned scroll. Know that no pen writes there
But wielded by a hand that all men dread;
And it must set a name conspicuous
Among the mighty that men venerate.'
Such lullaby composed the cradles of
Great chieftains once, and toned their infant souls.
Such firebrands kindled them to famous deeds.
Napoleon, the mounting soul that leapt
The world o'er with his daring eyes, and raised
His foot, colossal Europe to bestride,
Trode up ambition's heights with kingly walk:
And if, throned on the summit once, he fell,
That fall was glory, and no shame, which shook
A continent, and made its leaguered hosts
Quake in their bloody battle-harness, and
Pause doubtful, poised 'twixt victory and fear.

That steadfast soul
Spurned all for Fame, throttled his pleading heart,
And flung the violated victim on
The shrine of his devotion and his life;
He crushed that bosom, with relentless heel,
On which love's most luxurious feast he'd held,
And dashed aside your luscious passion draught
When Fame's imperious note rang on his ear.
If weakly Antony spurned earth's waiting throne
For a lewd queen's soft bosom of delight,
The great Gaul quitted for that throne a clasp
Beside whose chastely ravishing embrace
A nauseous sty was Egypt's common breast.
Fame is the mightiest rock in life's great main,
Toward which brave souls, like emulous swimmers, strain.
Renown survives heroic lives, as rays
Of stars, long after they are blotted out
From space, are visible to mortal eyes. —
But, hark! my violet-eyed!"
A voice uprose
Upon the murmurous cadence of the night,
Faint as a drowsy lily's lullaby,
Smit with the passion of the rose's core.

"Now the night-fairies sip
From the bright burnished lip
Of a fair golden chalice, the brimmed butter-cup;
And with glancing feet strew
The sweet, odorous dew,
Whose redolent nectar they greedily sup.

"My tuned heart's tense chords sleep,
For alone 'neath the sweep
Of wild love's master hand may their melody wake;
And the thirsts of my soul,
That my being control,
In love's mystic responses alone can I slake.

"Hear! ye fair fays who dance
In the moon's silver glance,
Leave ye now your blithe gambols and list to my plaint!
Go, elves, seek ye my lord
And bear to him this word,
That I pine for his coming, love-yearning and faint!

"And then, for your reward,
While ye dance on the sward,
Our joined hearts' wakened music shall quicken your feet:
For when young hearts unite
On a moonlighted night,
Love's full melody swelleth, transportingly sweet."

His pulses thrilled, and with wide-parted lips,
By sudden passion deeper crimson-stained,
Upstarted from his languid attitude,
He stood a moment flushed and radiant,
All heart and ears, his eager eyes ablaze;
Then, scattering glistering dew with hasty feet,
He sprang on quickly, till he paused beneath
An open casement, where a maiden stood.

Two short, sharp cries blent in one passionate breath,
A hastily kissed flower fell fluttering down,
And hardly had it touched his outstretched palm
Before she came adown the cypress walk,
With eyes love-dreamy, and with cheek aglow.
With the sweet, swimming bashfulness of gait
Of shy virginity, the maiden came,
Timid and faltering, yet void of fear.
Confidingly, with all that trembling trust
That mighty love inspires a warm maid with
In her young heart's bright hero, to the night
Herself she did commit, and bore with her,
For her defence from harm, that purity,
And virgin faith in him, which had been shield
E'en from unhallowed passion's wiliest lure.
Ardent as he, with maidenly reserve,
No shade of prudery, she gave to him
Divine elysium on her dewy mouth:
He, fain to linger on those humid banks,
Cooled his hot lips in their sweet honey-dews,
And laved his burning eyes in violet seas of bliss.
He revelled thus till passion gave him breath
To speak love-words, which foamed up from his heart
As the tossed surge which the deep, heaving sea
Flings on the shore; those magic sentences
By eyes and lips in concert syllabled;
Lore by love's mystic instinct first divined,
Love's utterance, to lovers only known.
"I feel the witchery of thy signal song
Yet on me, and its glamour," murmured he.

"How fair thou look'st, more fair than Cynthia,
Though she, by night, was peerless. Thou hast been
Communing with her, and she, grateful for
Thy sympathy, has spiritualized thee. Nay!
I'll sound the depths of those blue orbs, or, love,
I'll drown in them, and find delicious death."

"Drown, cruellest. I'll kiss thee back to life,
Or, failing, sigh my soul out on thy lips,
And overtake thine e'er it reach the clouds.
But stay! your coming half hath made me to forget,
And laid the haunting shadow of to-day!"
And love's warm hue, scared by the spectre Dread,
Fled from her cheek, and left it white and cold.
He sought to lure it back by tender speech:
"Sybilla, nay! to-morrow though I go,
Fame won, all eagerly to thee again
I'll hasten back, this breast my home.
Thou sigh'st!
Sweet, do not cloud remembrance of this night,
Which must be Memory's crowning jewel hence,
By sad foreboding. Nay! those pleading eyes!
Thou know'st for thee I would be famous. Thou'dst
Not have me march unknown, unnoted by,
A common soldier in the ranks of life?
Thy lord should be a foremost captain, with
Full many a dear bought battle-flag unfurled."

"Will words as loving cluster on the lips
Of that proud chieftain, will his heart not grow

More hard with all those battle scars and seams
Won wresting all those trophies from the field?
Should it prove so, I'd deem my warrior brought
A poor exchange, in all these honors, for
The tender beating heart I knew of old.
But, nay! I will not doubt thee, Rudiger,
Nor irk thee further by these woman fears.
My true love, only keep thy heart for me,
The world must have thy genius, it is fit.
Thou thirstest so for greatness, not as I
Content to live well blessed in love, and deem
The labor for the great ends which Fame crowns
Far nobler than the dazzling crown itself.
'Tis well, 'tis well, perforce. Go, genius, go!
There is no scope for thy ambition here;
Go thou, but leave with me thy heart."
"List, love.
'Tis a bright flower, thy love, surpassing all
The rest, and shall be worn upon the front
Of honor's shining chaplet, and shall be
The loveliest in that rare coronal.
It should be set upon no meaner crown;
That crown it is, Sybilla, I would have,
And 'tis for thee that most I covet it."
"Ah, no!" she sighed, "I fancy, were I dead,
You'd covet it as much to wear yourself
In triumph, not to lay upon my grave."
He chid her with a lover's blow, a kiss,
Returned at once, and many an one was dealt
Before the duel ended, — but at last

She yielded to her conqueror, and he,
With victory flushed, pushed his advantage up,
And to his former theme returned anew.
"Last night I trode a great man's banquet hall.
Brave men were there, — Columbia's ruling souls;
And beauty, rank, and wealth, high festival
Held proudly. But among the rest there walked
One who, albeit, sprung from ignoble source,
Had risen high in Fame's bright firmament,
Eclipsing all, as does the noon-day sun
Fade into hopeless dimness all the stars.
His lofty brow, behind which lay great thoughts
In rich profusion, gleamed out still and grand
Above his lucent eyes, like a tall ledge
Of mountain granite, whose unmovéd front
O'erhanging shining lakes, — their crystal depths
With fine reflections thick-caught from the skies
Arching o'erhead, — conceals far, far within
In subterranean caverns deep, remote,
Unfathomed treasures of the miser earth.
To him all bowed, rank, genius, beauty, all;
And their instinctive homage he received
With courteous, calm, and lofty dignity;
By men's admiring reverence all unmoved
As mighty Chimborazo, when before
Her awful peak the traveller kneels aghast.
Fame's lustrous halo glory-crowned his head
As the sun's risen beam earth's topping peak."

"But, looked he happy, does this glory shed

One gleam of happy sunshine on his heart?
Poor glory that, to comfort so the pride,
And leave the heart to starve and shrivel up!"

"Nay; no heart-break the lines of that face told.
His sun of love must melt the proudest fair;
No heart of woman could withstand the shock,
The electric passion-shock, of such a love
As that which in a soul like his is born.
I read the ill-concealéd traces of
Their ruling passions limned on other men;
Avarice, envy, swollen pride, and all
The petty vices that demean men's souls;
But when I turned to him there saw I naught
But a great orb of power, surpassing bright,
Unmoved, majestic, and how grandly calm,
Untouched by meaner passions.
Oh! but for
One hour to walk in men's sight so august,
I'd barter ages of these sorry days!"
The hot blood flushed his face, and warmed his brain,
And fired his eyes that blazed as though old wine
Ran riot in his veins.
"A great, calm God,"
Sybilla said, with the least little dash
Of banter, "made of marble, cold and hard.
This God would do to set up in the squares
For th' people, of their Sunday holidays,
To crowd about, and stare in awe upon."

"Nay, but to rule their councils, lead them on
To greatness, conquest; one whom nations choose
To build them up to loftiest altitude."
"Now hear me tell," said she, "of a renown
More deathless, — more imperishable far.
One of great heart, by all who knew him loved,
Not bowed before in awful worship, but
Revered and cherished for his gracious acts;
Dear to the people for that they were dear
To him, — not held by him as means to mount
Up to high place, — their greatest good his care.
True to his heart, and thirsting not for praise.
A glory rested on his face, which was
Not the cold pride world-worship has begot,
Nor yet the splendid glare of genius, but
A pure glow, as if all the holy thoughts,
That centred in his soul, were working out
An outward glory on his lineaments.
Were both this moment wrecked, and stranded on
The dreary waste of Eternity's bleak beach,
You'd see the calm strength of my hero far
Transcending your's with all his pride and power.
He's past, but lingers still. Know, Rudiger,
We feel the influence of such men's lives
Long after them; as on a sultry day
The hot, sun-wilted traveller, walking 'neath
The dripping trees, believes that still it rains
When the refreshing shower is o'er."
"Enthusiast!
But see, dear heart, yon moony hill invites.

Come, then; a night so fair doth swell the sweet,
Full fonts of love in the fond heart, till they
O'erflow the soul with their delicious waves.
Each moonlight night like this, when gales make love
And chase each other o'er the cool, green hills,
While their soft love-sighs music all the air,
I'll break from toil; and you, Sybilla, then
Watch yonder star, as I will do, until
Our souls shall blend in spiritual embrace;
And as it brighter grows than all its mates,
Then fancy 'tis thy hero-lover's fame
That reddens in the zenith. Let those eyes,
With violet depths so full of tenderness,
Read in that planet's throbbing light the love
For thee with which my being is aflame:
Then breathe a prayer with those ambrosial lips,
Whose potent fragrance now revives my soul,
That I may thus transcend the worldly throng
As that king-star outrays night's brilliant hosts.
Pour on it then, as now thou dost on me,
The sumptuous richness of those dreamy eyes,
And I will drink it in, though not as now
'Tis mixed with honey from thy luscious lips.
Oh! Charms and answering love like this, mine own,
Might tempt a zealot from his tug for fame, —
And yet that one, whose godlike valor is
The boast of these tame latter ages, did
Relinquish bliss like this at the behest
Of his ambition."

"Dost thou praise" said she,

"That cruel, tragic deed, that fatal act?
Heaven frowned upon it, fortune afterward
Deserted him at sorest need, for it,
And St. Helena was its penalty.
Then pity, not applaud, the fatal chance."
He smiled upon the sweet enthusiast,
And let the question pass without debate.
"Fame was a tempting toy, at least, to him
Who left to clutch it such a loving breast.
Seraphs can boast of no diviner thrill
Than in her sumptuous clasp the Conquëror knew."
A thought chased from her cheek its vivid rose.
"Nay, theirs is something far diviner, love;
Gone all this feverish want, uneasy need,
Which makes our mortal love so restless; there
Lovers may gaze into each other's eyes
For all eternity, nor wish aught beyond."

"Warm-lipped, rose-cheeked, down-breasted, beautiful!
That were a meagre Paradise for man.
This clasp, warm-blooded, were more worth by far.
To watch in a chaste maiden's eyes the flame
Of passion held in close subjection to
Inviolate chastity, 'tis love's sweet right.
Give me thy lips! Thy moon-gilt hair floats o'er
Thine ivory neck; those swimming, violet orbs
Great lakes of love in which I'd freely dip.
Again thy lips; thy moist palm thrills to mine.
Why dost thou freeze and shudder quick, as if
A cold blast chilled thy blood, Sybilla? Nay,

The breezes all are warm in unison
With this rich hour of love. Why tremble, lips?
I'll hold thee still with mine!"
She lay o'ercome,
Beneath his passion's driving fury and
A stormy gust of kisses, in his arms.
She half shrank from his venturous embrace
A moment, but, repenting soon, returned
Unto the shelter of her lover's arm.
Soon, "See," she cried, "we've wandered far. Yon is
The hut of that wild beldam, mad old Madge.
Thou know'st her piteous story?"
"Ay, it is
The old, old tale, as ancient as is sin;
Passion, brief joy, desertion and despair."
"Yes," said the maiden pitifully, "and
The world was harsh and called her foul, the while
It lightly blamed the other's greater sin.
She crazed, and ever since has been so fierce
That few e'er venture to molest her here.
She now is old and hideous, and, they say,
Hates with a bitter malice all mankind.
The village teems with stories of her; some,
The ignorant and superstitious, think
She is a witch in league with wicked fiends.
Ha! Look, 'tis she!"
She shrank and paled in dread.
"Fear not, nor tremble thus, thou quaking bird,
We must confront her. Fear not, trembling dove!"

A withered crone strode wildly up to them.
Straggling in tangled mass, her elfin locks
Streamed round a haggard face distained and marred.
She raised her skinny arm with gesture bold,
And laughed derisively in mocking tone.
"Know'st not thou that 'tis I alone reign here, —
Here where night-demons rave in darkness, here
With owl and toad and serpent I prevail, —
Where poisonous reptiles, man's fell enemies,
The storm fiends and the gibbering imps of sin,
Goblins and unclean spirits howl by night
And horrid orgies hold with damnéd glee,
Abide I. Would you have a baneful charm
To taint the life-blood of your deadliest foe
With festering poison or rank pestilence,
To wring a rival's heart with savage pang,
Or gall your neighbor? Thou shalt have it, but
Be wary or 'twill work its harm on you!"
Sybilla shuddered 'neath her fiery eye,
But Rudiger griped her arm with nervous grasp
And forced her from the path.

"Nay, woman, nay,
Silence your foul-mouthed ribaldry for shame!
All have their wrongs, but all the wronged, as you,
Do not malign the Fates; or, if they did,
One fearful curse of earth would smite heaven's gates,
Reverberate, rebound, and shatter her
With all her million, mad, blaspheming tongues."
With hateful leer the crazy hag rejoined,
"Who cannot prate? The chewing kine, who sees

His brother stagger 'neath the slaughterer's stroke,
Champs on his cud as calmly as before;
But once let drive the steel upon his head,
He'll bellow then as madly as the rest.
Preach on, my master, but when troubles come
You'll be the very first to cast away
Your cold philosophy.
You might as well
In the dull ear of a cold, shrouded girl
Mutter love's mean deceit in honeyed lies
As resignation to a wretch like me.
Would those late vows make whole her broken heart,
Or bring the life-blood to that frozen cheek?
Sin's victim I, and not her worker first,
Till the world maddened me by its cold scorn.
'Tis Heaven that doth ordain all things, you say;
Heaven, then, pursues me with malignant fate.
God is my enemy"——
"Hold! impious wretch!"
Said Rudiger.
But with a pitying voice
Sybilla interposed:
"Poor soul, we'd be
Thy friends. Nay! why that spiteful glare on us?
We never wronged thee."
"Ne'er wronged me!" she shrieked;
"Art thou not human, then; art devils, — else
Thou liest, for fiends alone molest me not.
What else for years but frightful injury
Has earth done unto me? Are not both men

And God my bitter, rancorous enemies?"
They shuddered at her imprecations which,
Too foul to hear, she uttered thick and fast.
He stayed her curses with rebuking voice.
"Dare not to hurl thy accusations vain
In face of Heaven; as storm-beat, boiling waves
In foolish wrath and futile fury beat
The unmoved shore, whose vasty breast sustains!"
"Forbear," Sybilla whispered, "she is mad."
Then, turning to her, said in softest tones,
"The holy heart beneath misfortune is
E'er tenderer, purer, and more beautiful;
As summer foliage, beat by driving storms,
Is brighter when the tempest's rage is past.
Misfortune's rain doth wash away sin stains
Gathered in tainting contact on the heart,
As do the cleansing thunder-storms remove
The sullying dust from off the forest leaves."
The gentle answer pacified her not,
But she stalked muttering off, and they strolled on
In silence and abstraction, hand in hand.
Rudiger mused in inward whisper, thus:
"'Tis ever such, the direful passion-wreck, —
Wreck all unlike that of Fame's votaries;
They who from lofty niches fall, and shake
The earth till every creature trembleth.
If I must fall, let not my fall be like
Th' ignoble lapse of passion's weakly tools,
But such a crash as takes the world's proud ear,
And makes the haughty mistress quake and pale."

Unconscious of his thoughts she walked by him,
Her eyes fixed on the tremulous vault o'erhead
Rich with its fervid freight of restless fires.
The spirit-look soon faded from her face
As Rudiger's warm fingers stirred her pulse.
An hour they roamed and whispered dreamily,
Reaping love's lavish harvest of fond vows,
And then they turned toward Sybilla's home.
"Twine now," said she, "this hour with strings of rhyme."

"That were to over-dress it; 'tis so decked
Already with those fine, rare ornaments,
Thy charms, it struts among its fellows, vain."

"Say a farewell at least to these fair shades.
'Twas here, beneath these listening trees, you first
Sank in the deep, glad waters of my heart
The anchor of your love; o'er it they closed
In happy, sweet delight. Ne'er drag it up,
And sail away, dear captain, wilt thou, to
New anchorage, soever blue the waves?
Call up the rapt look to thine eye! Nay, then,
Must I inspire you?
See, these dew-drops on
The flowers and trees are tears: they weep that thou
Wilt leave thy love alone. Go not without
A musical farewell!"
He shook the dew
From off a rose, who bent her graceful head,
And shed the sparkling load.

"Look, sweet," said he,
"Their tears are dried. No more for me they weep.
To-morrow they'll refresh another with
Their balmy breath. So wilt not thou, mine own.
All my farewell belongs alone to thee."
She laid her bright head lovingly upon
His breast, and raised to his her moistened eyes,
Which glowed like violets through a dewy mist.

And so they parted with a long arm strain,
Another kiss, and yet another, till
They followed countless, and grew into one
Long swoon of intermingled bliss and pain.
With sudden, nervous start, he loosened her;
A thrill, a sigh, a pang, beseeching eyes,
And then the man's will tore his heart away.
Oh, tender woman! were it left to thee
To end these partings, they'd forever last.

She stood quite motionless until she saw
Him vanish 'neath the shadow of the grove,
Then, with faint pulse and dull and laggard step,
She gained the broad steps.
Late at night she rose
And to her moonlit casement softly stole.
A cloud obscured the star which he had named
Love's Sentinel. She watched it till it past,
Her true heart beating with a perfect faith,
Her true eyes welling o'er with wistful tears;
And then she stole back to her tearful sleep.

The calm night-spirits watching round her couch
Admiring smiled, and kissed her virgin brow.

All sleep was banished from his teeming brain,
And flushed and fevered all the night he tossed,
While visions of Ambition haunted him.
The face of her he loved was present, too,
Smiling so sadly mid its golden hair;
But those wild visions of ambition came
Ever between him and her loving eyes.

"My life, my soul, my brain, all at thy feet,
Thou sun-eyed image, Fame, I cast with joy,
Hot, frantic, seething with desire for thee,
Soul-earnest, eager as fond Orpheus
Seeking his lost love 'mong fierce flames of hell!
See, see, great spirit, see thy Votary!"

The cloud that moment crost the Sentinel Star,
And the sleep guardians shuddered round his head.

II.

May's stormy heralds all came blustering in,
And she, young queen, new-crowned, with her gay train
Of sunny courtiers followed. Fain to please,
They laid aside the gorgeous, glaring tints
They love to flaunt in Summer's golden court,
And sought to catch her dainty fancy with
Pale crocuses, snow-drops, and hyacinths.
Eager and bold to fire her with his love,
The Sun addressed her with his blandest beams;
And all the elements, her suitors too,
Assumed their most engaging, genial mien
To win her favor.
Nature's face grew glad
Beneath her winsome smile and sunny eyes,
And, turning, weary from the iron reign
Of Winter, hailed the dawn of golden days
Beneath the gentle sceptre of young May.

A roaming morning breeze stole in upon
A student toiling in his lonely room,

Bent o'er old musty pages, whence all night
He had been gathering gems of olden lore.
It breathed upon his blue-veined lids, and played
About his heated temples till it called
His eager mind off from exhausting work.
He turned his pallid brow to the fresh air,
Which streamed in at the casement open flung.
His strained eyes rested with a grateful sense
Of coolness and refreshment on the scene
Without, where all things breathed of Spring's new life.
A night-storm, like a nightmare, left the sky
Oppressed with vagrant clouds like vague alarms,
Which daylight and awaking put to flight.
The hills looked dreamy, wrapped in a light fleece
Of vapor like a coverlet of down,
Their purple profiles indistinctly traced
On the horizon; and th' impatient sun,
Intent on visiting the earth, broke through
And put to rout the frightened ranks of clouds
Which formed presumptuously in his path.
Up to the hills' feet crept the moist, green vales,
And struggled hard to climb their rugged sides.
The saintly spires and mist-enchanted towers
Were shining in the vaporous morning air,
While their sweet tongues were slowly wagging with
A summons to the early matins, for
It was the blessed Easter season.

This
Delicious scene roused Rudiger; he drank

The air, as wine, from all the myriad urns
Which liberal Nature emptied far and wide.

"All Nature, on this joyous day, meseems,
Is celebrating some centennial;
And all the elements attend the feast,
Each in gay holiday array. The Sun,
To lead the revelry, despatches all
His gladdest, brightest, much-rejoicing beams.
The breezes, hand in hand, come whispering
Like happy lovers, with soft, balmy breath;
And earth's freed waters dance with joy along,
Laughing and leaping in high festive glee
To join the carnival. Urged forth by all
This jubilant, elemental harmony,
The vegetable world puts freshly forth
Clad for the gala all anew in green.
A century ago this festal day,
Perchance, some pale and brooding student in
His silent cell, apart from noise and men,
Conceived a grand and sinewy thought, and for
Its shining service in the cause of truth
Our kindly mother solemnizes thus
Its natal day. She, seeing far, doth prize
The silent hour when living thoughts are born,
Beyond the loud parade that celebrates
Their christening by the world, and thus doth give
The glory to the real author, though,
Perhaps forgotten or unknown by men,
In some unnoted corner of the earth

He sleeps, unconscious of their praise or slight, —
The crown that Fame had fashioned for his brow
Usurped, or flaunted by another to
Th' admiring eyes of an applauding world.
Kind Nature! who, impatient of the fraud
Which hath despoiled his name of Fame on earth,
Art offering upon his lonely grave
Thy meed of praise in this high pomp to-day,
To join his pæan I unite with thee."

He ceased and sat in light, mute revery.
His pallid face had changed much in few years.
The omens of fierce noon that threatened once
Now, more portentous, waxed toward noon's full strength.
The struggling fire of young ambition, now
Confirmed into a strong and vivid blaze,
Burnt steadily and brightly in his eyes.
The freshness of the face had faded, and
His brow, once tinged with healthy rose, was blanched
By passion, toil, and keen expectancy,
While dry, hot lips told of the fever heat
At which ambition kept his young blood up.
But what in the warm, sanguine, sunny hues
Of youth's endearing, frank ingenuousness,
His face had lost forever, it had gained
In strong expression, and the confidence
Of an experience more mature; that look
Of much world-wisdom, ~~that~~ which nothing else
Will age the countenance of man so soon:
A barter which the wise world doth esteem

A fortunate one, and highly doth commend;
But which a mother, to an instinct of
Her nature true, doth ever dread to see
Steal from her boy's face its sweet, childhood look.
A patient study he had made the world;
And the hard lines that wavered round his mouth
Betokened he had profited thereby.
Men marked him now and knew him rising fast.
His constancy, enthusiasm, pains,
Had even made the selfish crowd look up,
Delving on in the mud and slime of earth
At the unending human grope for gold.

A statesman had become the patron of
Young Rudiger, — statesman at least in name
And office, — and the people called him great.
'Twas doubtful whether Rudiger deemed him
One of those master minds that sway the world.
Some keep step with, nor lag behind, the ranks
Of the fast-marching age; while others, formed
By nature for fore-captains, take the lead;
And lordly souls like these control and rule
The boisterous sea of public sentiment.
The mystery he fathomed, how some have
By circumstance, or adventitious means
Of some sort, been uplifted, as does ice,
Forming on heavy stones in river-beds,
By its inherent lightness lift them up
To float upon the surface of the stream.
Let the ice melt, and they relapse again

To their obscurity of pristine mud;
So men revert to native nothingness,
Those who have risen on void, fictitious grounds,
When their weak props of circumstances melt.
But whether one of these his patron was
It mattered not, for men had given him
A pinnacle in their esteem. He saw
Full many such on every side he looked,
Some high in station o'er our darling land.
This dangerous wrong he bitterly deplored.
The sacred guards that cluster round our orb
Of Liberty, should be great, earnest souls,
Men of a high and holy purpose, minds
Sublime and wise and strong and splendid as
The statesmen stars about their empress moon,
With eager vigilance who watch her climb
Up to her zenith.
But the statesman saw
In Rudiger those powers, intentness, and
Resolved ambition, potent to surmount
All stop or let to final eminence.
So, with the selfish generosity
Of worldly calculation, to the youth
He lent his influential patronage,
Assured that from that protegé's success
The world would argue wisdom in himself.

Among the lessons Rudiger had learned
Had been that dangerous, sometimes fatal one
Unto the conscience of aspiring youth,

That craft and shrewdness are more potent oft
Than plain desert to further worldly ends.
He saw around in lofty eminence
Great minds, great souls, whose genius should have gilt
Columbia's head with an immortal sheen,
Lending their powerful intellects to the side
Of self-advancement and of party craft.
The most he found adepts in stratagem
By which they'd clomb to their proud posts of state;
And few who ever placed the public weal
Above the thought of private interest.
At first this ever shocks the young enthusiast,
Fresh from the glorious and frenzied dreams
Of youth's ideal of greatness and of Fame, —
The eloquent and heroic visions of
Unworld-tried souls; but 'tis not long before
They overcome the first revolt, and ere
Enthusiasm can recover from
The disenchantment of reality.
He was not one to witness the tournay
Of vying and competing men, and not
Catch the wild, emulous spirit of the joust.
Soon 'mong the foremost, eager in the fray,
His crest was seen, and men made way for him.
He would have trembled had he realized
How great the change he must have undergone
Before he smiled at the dire spectacle
Of daily and continual vice and wrong,
Which first had horrified and sickened him.
Thus the first gulf was passed; that strong outwork

Against the siege of sin, the sensitive
And tender conscience of unhardened youth,
Was carried at the onset by assault.
Not that sin's bold caress seduced him, — he
Had not yet stooped from honor by one act,
But lost the sensitive impressions of
Young innocence in the coarse, jarring crowd;
And, what was still more perilous, he was
Unconscious of the loss he had sustained.
Thus, like shorn Samson, he unwittingly
Had been betrayed, and cheated of that strength
Which, like a crown of might about his head,
Had frighted coward foes from the assault,
And borne him mail-proof through temptation's toils.

He was Ambition's Votary: to Fame
His life, his strength, his intellect were pledged;
And abstractly he recognized the fact
That 'twas the ruling spirit of his life,
Unto whose power o'er him all else must bend.
Yet he brought not the living image home
Of the enthralment of his nature to
The mastery he confessed. Ambition yet
Had not asserted its dominion o'er
His heart, which still was free to bear the yoke
Of love alone, — a yoke so sweet to wear
That men assume it eagerly. So from
Present immunity his heart felt not
The danger of the struggle to ensue,
Should e'er his autocrat demand at her

Proud shrine the immolation of his love.
As he sat drinking in
Th' invigorating air, the thought of her
Came o'er his spirit as the balmy breath
Of spring o'er his strained, weary senses. He
Drew forth a missive that had lately come
From her, and read,
"Nay! do not rail at me.
The perfect bliss to which love e'er aspires
Is not of earth. Ah! were I by thy side
I know that thou would'st look reproach, and chide.
But, Rudiger, when first you talked of Fame,
And I beheld your soul's unsatisfied,
Hankering disquiet, first I felt like this.
On earth no music else charms so mine ears
As, leaning on thy breast, to hear thy heart,
Love's instrument, strike harmony with mine,
The sweet duet of two love-beating hearts.
But even in that witching melody
There is a jarring discord from the world.
My love! I long to have thee in some sphere,
Where love alone can enter from the world,
And all our wild heart's passionate unrest
Subside into a calm security
Of an entire, complete fruition. Oh!
If our love here, which hath an earthy tang,
So rapturous be, what were its transports then
When spiritualized in Immortality.
The numb philosophy, by pedants taught,
That Paradise dissolves peculiar ties,

Which bind two human hearts in union close,
And merges theirs in th' universal flood
Of love which deluges the courts of heaven,
I cannot own. There is no need to think
That the fast clinging of two hearts doth wrong
The general love that we should bear toward all.
Our God, who here doth hallow it, in heaven
Will render it twice sanctified and pure.
And though ambition should divide thy heart
With love on earth, love claims the whole in heaven.
Naught but the perjury of one can tear
Our souls asunder in eternity, —
Thou'rt not that traitor, darling, nor am I."
He placed the letter in his breast.
"Lie there,
And if it may, let thy pure faith impress
Its tender beauty on my wayward heart."
He turned again unto his book, and thought's
Pale flame, rekindled in his brain, lit up
His studious brow with its white, steadfast ray.

Anon a shadow flitted o'er his page.
He, glancing quickly up, saw Adelaide,
The statesman's daughter, proud as Juno, with
A face and form of regal beauty, such
As painters limn when they'd depict a queen.
Her sumptuous form was clad in emerald silk;
An India shawl fell lightly from a neck
And shoulders statuesquely beautiful.
Her radiant face and splendid hazel eyes,

Full of fine crystal gleams, were softened by
A snowy veil of rarest frost-work lace;
She wore her rich attire with dainty grace,
And shone in splendor as her native right,
As the magnolia shines upon her stem,
The rightful heiress of her glossy leaves.

"Sir Student! fair good-morrow," said she, "I
Am peeping in to catch a glimpse of this
Dull oyster here. Nay! shrink not in thy shell!
Behold! the royal morning walks abroad!
Wilt thou to church with me? Thou'rt weary, sure.
Here is thy candle, burnt to death last night;
A martyr at the stake, who, in thy cause,
All night has suffered, and when gray dawn came
And thou no more required'st her martyrdom,
Sank fainting and expired. Thou torturer!
I think you need indeed to go to church."
He joined her at the gate. The lady held
Her vein of raillery.

"I wonder much
How, on such gala days of Nature, you
Endure in your drear cell to ponder o'er
Those tiresome books, the horrid, musty things?
I think you'd be worse than the very grub
That feasts upon my father's learned shelves,
And ne'er crawl out at all, wer't not that I
Stirred you at times by dusting the old tomes."
She whipped her gilded prayer-book, as she spoke,
With gossamer handkerchief, then added with

An arch and sidelong glance, "You worship, sir,
With too blind adoration. Know you not
That any mistress, even Fame, will tire
To see her lover ever kneeling at
Her feet?"
"Ah! lady, lovers ne'er are wise.
Let us poor slaves but stare at beauty's face
We are content. Now, were I not indeed
So far gone, I might be more politic."
He spoke thus in a playful badinage,
And then, flushed with deep earnest, added, "But
My mistress, lady, is no faithless one,
Nor bend I listlessly beneath her eyes.
Of ardent, striving souls she will not tire."
"Be not o'er confident; I've heard of men,
No drones, but fervid, toiling laborers,
After a long, devoted wooing, struck
Cold with her scorn and killed by her neglect."
"'Twere worth the risk to venture for the prize.
How fair the morning is! Like a new bride
Th' rejoicing landscape basks beneath the smile
Of her bright, wanton lord, the Sun. She'll weep
When he puts on his crimson robes to-night,
And leaves her in the twilight to her grief;
But yet to-morrow she as sweetly will
Smile on him as if he had ne'er been false.
'Tis that pale sufferer, the maiden Moon,
Forever pining with her hopeless love,
And sadly following close upon his heels,
Who whispers patience to her, till that she,

Fond e'en to doting, smiles the truant back
When he returns to-morrow, and o'erlooks
His last night's frailty."
Her indignant eyes
Flashed fire, and in an instant rang the sharp
Report of her reply from quick curled lips.
"Poor fool!"
He bent a steadfast gaze on her,
And 'neath that look, as bounds an eager steed
Who feels his rider's lash, the fiery blood
Leapt to her cheek and dashed across her face.

They reached the sanctuary and went in.
Like soothing balsam on his sore, racked brain
The high words of the morning service fell.
The inspiration of the morning, too!
When all the world around was reeking in
Its business and its pleasures, here, within
This solemn temple of Most High, went up,
In worship, penitential prayers sublime,
Which the church shares with all who will partake.
The lady's father joined them in the throng.
"A wonder and a mystery," said he,
"What drew you from your thoughts and books; was it
The morning smile of the fair siren May?
Know you what spell has charmed our student out?"
He turned, with an arch smile, to Adelaide.
"You were the enchantress, daughter, I divine,
And potent are your spells. So, Rudiger,
The spring has thawed that heart of ice, then, that

It wakes to verdure 'neath two sunny eyes!"
With gracious smile he spoke, — and Rudiger
Looked up in ill-concealed astonishment.
Ha! could it be! The very thought smote on
His heart as if a reeling blow were dealt,
That he, the statesman there, would have him woo
His child, her at whose haughty feet there knelt
So many high in place, in bootless suit!
Seemed he to them so worth possessing; was
His progress, then, so marked, and his success
So plain as to command such preference!
This thought drove to his heart a shock of joy,
But soon dismissed as a foul wrong to her
In whose sweet keeping he had left his faith;
He struck it from him.

"See," the statesman said,
"Yon slight, dark youth is the new poet who
Doth sway the fickle fancy of the world."
"Is it," said Rudiger, "that fragile youth
With the pale, swarthy face and lustrous eyes, —
Eyes set ablaze by burning thoughts within?
A rich-dowered soul, and laden with fine thoughts
As thick as skies with stars. Whene'er I hold
Within my hand that book, in which he gave
A glimpse of his great soul unto men's eyes,
I feel it throb and pant with passion and
With life; my own heart beats in unison."

"He sings sweet songs," said Adelaide, "there's one,
A tale of passion, of a maid who loved

A youth who knew it not, but, too, himself
Loved her with wild idolatry. At night
Both lay awake and for each other longed
With feverish cheeks and pulse, — or, their poor lips
Blanched by despair, they lay in pining pain;
And, all the time, both quite unconscious that
The love was theirs for which they would have died.
So, daring not unfold her heart, she paled
And died, and with her last breath sent to him
A message laying her occult love bare:
Which, when he heard, so fired his desperate soul
He let it out to follow her and tell
Of his own passion: 'tis a stirring rhyme."

"He sings the tale of love in strains so sweet
As steal the hearts of gentle maids away.
He has bewitched you by his minstrelsy,"
Her father interposed, with mischief in
His laughing eyes, and half mock-earnest voice;
And he tapped playfully the glowing cheek
Which crimsoned deeply 'neath the covert jest.

"The poet is," said Rudiger, with warmth,
"A soul inspired, who to the listening world
Sings great truths in divinest melody."
"Or rather," said the lady, "he is one
Who telleth in the sweetest verse of one
Great truth in all its variable forms."
"His business, then, is all with love?" he asked.

"It is his sole, transcendent, glorious theme.
For love, methinks, is the great truth which rules
The Universe; first in its grosser forms
Of human passion, — no mean theme itself, —
Up to its higher phases, Being, God.
'Tis the primeval truth; with it the world
Began, with it shall end. Eternity
But ushers man into its higher spheres."

"The singing race should laureate thee for
Thy sweet defence of their vocation. Are
Not poets like Athenian lampadists,
Who, bearing lighted torches, run a race?
He wins who brings a burning torch to goal.
So, in the poet's emulation, he
Whose genius burns with unquenched splendor to
The end, whose fire of soul pales not before
The rapid motion, is a conqueror,
And wins a prize, a garland from Fame's hand.
Now he, methinks, of whom we just now spoke,
Comes in a winner with a blazing torch, —
That wondrous book with its great panting heart,
Like a full cup of stars of which you quaff
And never drain."

"Ah! yes," said Adelaide,
"And every star you drink burns in the heart
With never deadening fire."

"You drink the stars,
And from a cup! Nay, then, hold, spirits, straight;
Her father interposed, "By Bacchus! I

Own to a grosser nature than is yours.
Your starry beverage I covet not.
I am of less ethereal mould. Yours is,
I know, a flashing draught, but give to me
A cup that no more sparkles than red wine,
And you may share between you all the stars.
I love the stars, but love them in their spheres;
'Twould sully them to handle them so much."
"We shall not tarnish them," said Adelaide,
"Nor ever scorch our hands by plucking them;
But in our dreams at night a little sprite
Comes bearing them in his candescent arms,
And takes them back to their own spheres at dawn."
"Rest the debate," the statesman said, "for see
Here are our gates! Come thou with us within,
Star-drinker, and compare the sparkle of
Our ruby wine with thy libation of
Cold stars; thou'lt find 'twill warm the heart far more."

They sat in a luxurious library
Lined with rich stores of books, and grand with busts
Of those books' makers; busts of marble, yet
The stone will crumble ere their pages die.
There was no lack of red wine, flashing in
Clear crystal goblets, whose swift glow doth urge
The tongue of genius into a fine blaze,
Calls up the red flush to the brow, inflames
The lips with words of burning eloquence,
And gilds the drinker's face with godlike sheen.

He with his host talked on high themes of state,
His subject in fine thoughts bedecking as
In costly robes, to suit its dignity.
The lady sat with folded hands, and bent
Her head in mute attention while they talked.
Hers was that splendid beauty that surmounts
All criticism, but no frigid, still
Perfectitude asleep in classic calm.
Stately she was and statuesque, but with
A woman's ardor warming all her mien;
Loving and lovable as beautiful.

Soon their discourse dropped off from politics.
And Adelaide took up the thread.
"Dost thou
Recall one story of that poet whom
We saw at church? 'Tis of the daughter of
An ancient house, heir to a fearful curse;
Whose every scion, till a certain age,
Must be subjected to the damnéd charms
Of a vile demon, who assumed fair shapes
To fascinate, and lure to dreadful death."

"Ay! lady; and the verse unfolds how that
If once the victim signed a parchment, which
The fiend possessed, the devilish spell prevailed;
But if he reached the age and had not signed,
He from temptation thenceforth was exempt.
Many had fallen 'neath the spirit's arts,
For he was subtle to assume disguise

That lulled suspicion, — and the castle had
From heir to heir descended, till at last
The last of all the line possessed it now."

"Here is the volume, pray recite the rhyme.
Lend me your voice with poesy to charm
This slowly creeping noon, — their witchcraft is
More magical than any pastime else
With which to exorcise its languidness;
And scare its ennui."
Passing him the book
She pledged him richly in her cup, but sweetlier in
The liquid richness of her dreamy eyes.
The poet's legend o'er his burning lip
Poured musically, as a singing stream
Purls o'er a moss-grown stone in summer glade.

The tale was touching; for the poet told,
In the sweet flow of his most witching rhyme,
How by her race's devilish enemy,
In the disguise of a bold, gallant knight,
The maid was wooed and won; and nearly had
Been won to sign the fatal parchment, when
Her watchful, grizzled sire detected the
Foul spirit 'neath his brave disguise, and snatched
The perilled maiden from her threatened fate.
But she was crazed by the unmasking of
Him whom she had entrusted with her heart,
And thenceforth evermore went wandering through
The thick wood which had been their wonted tryst,

Calling upon her lover-knight by name,
And weeping wildly when he still came not;
While from the forest's black and secret depths
The foul fiend's voice, in devilish taunting, mocked
The pleading, piteous invocations of
The sweet, distracted maid in her fond search.

"Enough! enough; no more of the sad tale!"
Cried Adelaide. "Love blighted her, poor soul!
So tightly clung her heart about its god
The falling image stunned the cleaving thing.
They are not wise, these lovers, so to dote,
For perjury, deceit are rife, — they're mad
To jeopardize their all, who see so oft
That demons lurk beneath the fairest mask.
I have seen poor infatuate creatures so
Enthralled by the dominion of love's yoke,
As to dote on more madly still, when to
Their hearts that one's base falsehood is revealed
To whom they have surrendered being — all.
Shame on them! They deserve no pity in
Whose hearts one shade of feeling lingers for
The wretch who has outraged love's sacred vows.
I do remember me a fair, fond wife,
Whose chaste breast he, who swayed its every thrill,
Forsook for the seductive bosom of
A shameless Circe, whose voluptuous spells
Diverted his light love from the fair channel of
Her own, as clear and beautiful as the
Sweet silver spring, born amid sylvan shades.

My heart bled for the true wife's deadly wrong,
Went with her, all alert, to her revenge,
Suggesting consolation and resolve;
But when, poor doting fool, her direful work
Of retribution half complete, she paused
Relenting and forgiving, I rebelled,
Indignant, 'gainst her weak and failing heart.
I blushed for her that woman ever should
Demean herself to cringe 'neath man's deceit."

"A base-born passion, bastard counterfeit
Of love, may breed revenge," said Rudiger;
"Wronged love knows indignation and despair,
But not retaliation, — as sweet herbs
Whose leaves crushed hard by cruel fingers yield
A stronger fragrance, but, if they are foul,
A more revolting stench."
"Such is your creed.
A very fine faith, a choice theory.
Know that the falsest tenets fairest hold
Till trial proves their flaw. The soul is not
At best, ennobled by the purest love,
So clear but that a taint of passion and
A fallen nature's weakness cling to it.
Scorn is the refuge of insulted hearts,
And vengeance is a human passion. Hate
Will sprout spontaneous forth from injury."

"These are the words of the untried; as boys
Are heroes to fight ogres all day long,

But shake for fear of them in bed at night.
With love comes tenderness to hardest hearts;
And, though the love be killed, the tenderness
Survives, and puts to rout all imps of hate
The devil can despatch."

He rose to go.
"Adieu! then; but, sir student, I enjoin
Return not now forever to those tomes.
You are more human for this brief release.
Repeat the dose, we do prescribe, and let
The outer world sometimes get glimpse of you."

"Galena, thanks, — the draught intoxicates.
He who once quenches thirst at a sweet spring
To drink of its blest waters oft returns.
Adieu, fair spirit of the Spring!"

A friend,
Known well and loved of Rudiger, joined him,
Who clapt him on the shoulder boisterously,
And, jesting in youth's idle fashion, said:
"So, Rudiger, you are a favored knight, —
The father gracious, and the daughter not
Unkind, I will be bound. Why, man alive,
Without their pomp or pains you distance all
The swarm of suitors buzzing vainly round.
Though haughtier than Jove's queen, she is no jilt.
You will not lack advancement, Rudiger.
Statesmen control the offices, you know.
You're bound to mount, would mount alone, 'tis true;
And yet a man in power may aid you, eh?"

His listener started, and a whirl of thoughts
Spun madly through his scared and startled brain.
The world assigned him, then, to Adelaide,
And she, superb in beauty, — but, pshaw!
It booted not, the world's vain, vague surmise.
It bound him not, — he recked its babble naught.
And, reasoning thus, he shut his conscience out;
Which proved the presence of a demon thought
That skulked in the dark corners of his soul.

Late one night he sat
With pallid brow, and contemplative eyes
For study too thought-thick.
From belfries dark
Black midnight groaned, with hoarse and hollow voice,
Unto the world the burial of a day.
He shuddered at the awful, ghostly voice;
And midnight's weird, unutterable thoughts
Thronged in his brain and wanton riot ran.
Mad phantasies, amazing secrets of
The brain, and dark, unearthly mysteries,
In some strange recess of the being hatched,
In chaos of confusion crowded on
His soul, appalled, crazed almost by its own
Monstrous creation and wild labyrinth.
He sat pale, with his soul's scare in his eyes,
Until that soul grew used unto itself
And its own wondrous immortality,
Which midnight solitude had made it feel.

Then giant Reason, baffled for a time,
Waved his magician wand sublimely o'er
The spectre horde and exorcised them all;
And his soul grappled sternly with its sense,
Its speechless sense, of Immortality, —
And thus his thoughts ran:

"In Eternity
How shall I stand! He whose capacity
Of soul is greatest hath the loftiest place,
The highest joy can know, is closest to
The essence of the Deity, can drink
The deepest draught of Immortality,
And the supernal sun of Eternity
Shines fullest in upon his being's core.
The centre of the universe is mind,
Which men call Intellect, — and that is God, —
Each soul an efflux from that Spirit, as
Each ray of light an emanation from
The Sun, — an individuality, —
But yet not separate from the Primal Life,
A part of it, though still distinct itself.
And as that emanation dwindles down
From its original proportions, so
The Life flows back insensibly unto
Its source in God, — who drinks it up again.
But God attaches to each single soul
A consciousness which never can be lost;
And this, when it hath lost its all divine,
Lives on forever yet, — and this men call
The conscience. This the creed which I accept

And find no better. Now, the highest aim
Of man should be to keep this spark of God
From diminution; rather, let him add,
By hardest exercise and service, to
Its vigor, till it draw more glory from
The Supreme treasury. It follows, then,
That they, 'mong men who have obscurely lived,
Who have not even shone conspicuous
On earth's dark background, must show pale, indeed,
In th' effulgent glory of Eternity.
Great souls it is that thirst for fame on earth.
Such win it here, and leave their names imprint
In golden brand indelible on Time,
For all the ages after them to read;
While the immediate Court of Deity
They enter, bright in glory's shining robes.

"Fame is the guerdon for which I contend.
My grappling soul is earnest in the work,
And boldly sues the glances of Fame's eyes.
My soul, last night, was filled with her in sleep.
In dreams I steered my brittle bark across
A tideless ocean, whose quiescent breast,
Waveless and shoreless, slept in stagnant calm.
O'er the far waters, which, a boundless waste,
Swept far beyond the limits of my sight,
Reigned such repose, chaotic stillness, that
My heart's quick beat grew slow in sympathy.
Then 'twas, alone, launched on a desert sea,
Beneath, the fathomless depth of silence, all

True, Nature is man's mighty creditor,
And he must promptly satisfy her claims,
But need not heap such lavish interest
As fades the principal into a doit.
He feasts the flesh, but fasts the intellect;
The body gluts, but famishes the brain;
Yet, of great Pompey's clay, these carcasses
May be compact, or Alexander's dust.

"'Tis the same earth that 'twas in Cæsar's day;
The mighty seas still in their basins toil
Where they retreated, or were driven back,
In the primeval contest waged between
The elements for the supremacy;
And the fierce fires, as in a prison house,
In the earth's centre rage, wherein they were
Hurled in the dreadful conflict. Not a grain
Has earth gained more, nor atom lost, in Time,
But still through space her customed gyre she wheels
As when the Sun was young, and had not seen
Her fair face blighted by man's ravages;
When white and shining, as a dew-drop fair,
She hung divinely beautiful in air.

"And has the human soul in all these years
Been shrivelling into such a stunted dwarf,
Willing and glad to grovel in the dust,
And grope on blindly in earth's noisome scum?
Was't not more glorious in those olden days
To live? What says that grand and reverend seer,

Around whose awful and mysterious head
The gloom and clouds of Antiquity collect;
But on whose front sits Revelation throned,
Lights the dim vista with supernal eyes,
And makes all clear that else were dark as death!
What sayst thou, History? The prophetess
Points through the mist of ages to the page
Of her vast, time-stained record, solemnly, —
The great, who in all ages have led men,
Intrepid chiefs in council and in field —
Children of genius, whatsoever paths
Of glory inspiration lead them through.
Involuntarily I raise my eyes,
And see them blazing in that book of Fame,
The teeming vault o'erhead, whence Antony
Hath faded out, and in his place a star,
Far-rending space with its refulgent ray,
Is entered there.
Oh! Child of Glory! Thou,
Whose royal shade stalks gloomily along,
Heading the shadowy ranks now trooping by
In the night's gloom, in that undaunted mien
Of thine and thine Old Guard, — whose warlike ghosts
Have rallied round their Emperor's spectre, and,
As erst to bloody, earthly battle-fields,
March silent by with noiseless, spectral tread, —
I read the lesson of thy wondrous life.
Teach thou my tottering soul, great conqueror,
The strength of will and iron purpose that
Bore thee straight on to Fame, untempted by

Around, o'erhead, the occluded arch of heaven,
My awe-struck spirit, sad and conscious, felt
Its being on this wilderness of wave.
Pale Frenzy clutched at me with hungry glare;
I, desperate, shook the greedy demon off.
Aimless and lone, I cast the oar adrift;
My bark stood still; when, through the empty void,
All dim, and indistinct, and shadowy,
An aerial colonnade I seemed to see.
The hazy outlines first I deemed the wild
Creations of my brain, that mocked my eyes;
But slowly, as I gazed, the mist uprose,
Revealing to my vision plainly where,
Close on the water's edge, on a fair isle,
A triple range of columns airily,
Of alabaster gleam and brightness, rose,
T' support the golden dome above on their
Wrought capitals of exquisite device.
The narrow beach shone with the glistering light
Of pebbles of all hues, and pearly shells,
Argent and gold, and coral branches, that
Glowed redly in the golden-lustred sand.
With eager hands I paddled round my bark.
On every side the airy structure stretched
Down to the shallow beach's burnished marge,
Stupendous and translucent. Marble stairs,
Which seemed to come up from the ocean's depths,
Led to a bronze door fast with monstrous bolts.
An armèd sentinel paced before this door.
I hailed him, with, 'Is this Fame's temple, tell?'

He answered, 'Ay, and this earth's outer gate.'
My boat now grazed the marble stairs, — I leapt,
With frantic joy, upon the slippery steps,
And at the door rushed headlong, furious.
Flung back, bruised, stunned, half blinded, I beheld
My heart burned to a cinder in my breast.
The anguish woke me. What forebodes this dream?"
He, breathless, paused; and a convulsion strong
Griped his pale face and bleared his darkling eyes
As if a blast of fire had swept them o'er.

Two hours past midnight, Rudiger stood at
His casement, gazing out upon the town.
All there was still; and, muttering, he spoke:

"They sleep, those slothful images of clay,
And waste the soul's best aspirations and
Its true immortal powers in sleep indulged
Beyond the body's need. So, stewing in
Their carnal, base, and sensual appetites,
They do defile, or lose, the holy night,
With all its golden opportunity
For studious thought, or well-rewarding toil.
The soul, enslaved by coarsest passions, doth
In vain against such tyrants struggle, as
The raving wretch, poisoned with pestilence,
And with the death-damp pale and weak, contends
With the foul plague which, in its deadly hug,
Fast binds him down on the loathed bed of death.

Aught short of thy great guerdon, France's throne.
Heart! down to rest! Peace, struggler, I am firm!
Resolve is in my soul and cannot yield.
Let me not think, but instant hurry on
To that safe point whence turning there is none.
Till planted there irrevocably, I
Am never safe from this weak, wistful heart,
Whose pleading voice action alone can drown."

His whole frame quivered, and his pallid face,
With fearful throes convulsed, he upturned to
The shining heavens. There stood the watchful star;
It seemed to throb and pant, as if in pain,
And shed its tremulous rays like showers of tears.
He cowered beneath its warning aspect, and
A stern, dark shadow lowered o'er his brow.
The star in sadness shrank behind a cloud;
And round a sleeping maiden far away
The nightly guardians wound their soothing arms,
And smoothed with their bright hands the troubled brow,
Which anguished dreams had spread with agony.

III.

The festal glee waxed high. Around the board,
Reflecting in its polished face the glow
Of the rich juice of splendent, sanguine dye,
Were gathered jocund men, whose hearts elate
Were laden full and running o'er with mirth.
Flushed, palmy revelry sat in every soul,
And wove festoons of bright, ephemeral flowers;
And, conscious of her transient empire, the
Enchantress heaped the lavish coronals high,
And brimmed the soul with short-lived ecstasy.
Light-footed Wit its flashing circle glanced,
And perched upon the goblets' crystal brim,
And fringed the lips with brilliancy, the while
It spiced the wine to finer flavor yet, —
And reeled the jest its giddy dance around.

High at the board, where thickest was the glee,
Sat Rudiger, the wildest reveller.
The redolent Muscadine was in his brain,
His very soul steeped in its maddening fumes,

While the hot flood of mirth, that swelled his breast,
He welcomed in to drown remorseful thought.
A mad, wild pride, and a fierce relish of
The incense of man's adulation, flamed
From his deliriously glancing eyes.
One sparkling stream of furious, dashing wit
Poured from his lips, which men applauded loud,
Amazed by, but admiring, the strange show.

Now, through the hall, rang a gay bacchanal's song.

"Let amber wine
In tankard shine,
Rich floods of light o'er all be poured;
For wine and light
Make day of night,
When young hearts gird the festive board.
Chorus: Why, then, fill up
The jovial cup
And quaff it off to beauty's eyes, —
For love and wine,
When they combine,
Of this dull earth make Paradise.

"In festal hour
Love's fairest flower
The chalice crowns, and scents the wine;
Each bud bends low
To kiss the glow
Of the fire-nectar of the vine,
Chorus: Why, then, fill up, etc.

"He is a churl
Who, to the girl
His heart enthrones, will not imbibe.
Then spill the wine
On beauty's shrine,
And honor to them both ascribe.
CHORUS: Why, then fill up, etc."

Now shouted one, "Unto his lady each
A bumper pour!" And whispered he who sat
By Rudiger, his closet friend, "Begin,
As fit, with hers, thy dainty Adelaide's!"
He filled his flagon quickly, to comply,
But, ere his lips could form the name, a star,
Through the wide casement shining, caught his eye.
It was the same that he had singled out
For beacon to Sybilla of his faith;
And now it rose before him in this hour
Of direst peril to his tempted troth,
A warning sentry, stationed by himself.
His stiff, erect form, glaring, glassy eyes,
White, rigid face and bloodless, parted lips, —
The fiery wine-cup raised in his fierce clutch, —
Appalled them all. A minute's silence reigned,
'Till his astounded friend put out his hand;
The touch alarmed his vagrant senses home,
But still his lips paled deeper as they formed
The name of Adelaide, and in one breath
He drained the brimming goblet in his hand;
And then he dashed off with a mocking laugh

Into a storm of incoherent words.
No one could understand the scene, and soon
The reign of mirth dispelled its memory.
When not an eye observed, with nervous hand
He hastily thrust the crimson curtain o'er
The casement, and shut out all sight of sky.

Midnight was old ere parted the gay group.

A dainty place was Adelaide's boudoir.
The draperies of the walls and windows were
Pale azure with pink roses broidered o'er.
The floor was India-matted, for it was
Midsummer, thickly strewn with velvet rugs,
Whose ground was soft cream-color, sprinkled with
Blue violets and snowy asphodels.
On ottomans, with linings of blue silk,
Her books and her guitar lay carelessly.
Fresh flowers in parian vases shed around
Their dreamy fragrance. A fair face in oils
Hung o'er a mantel, — in white marble carved
Like to the sedgy margin of a brook, —
Her early-dead Italian mother's face,
With jetty hair and eyes, — dark, loving eyes, —
And full of mournful tenderness, 'neath which
The daughter knelt each morn and night in prayer,
With holy reverence. A porcelain globe
Poured from its argand-burner mellow light
Upon a few rare statuettes, which were
By folds of thin gauze softened, not obscured.

Here Adelaide awaited Rudiger.
Her head leaned on her arm, the lady sat
Absorbed in a sweet, languid revery.
Her cheek was warmly with vermilion flushed, —
The flush of beauty's triumph from the ball.
Upon her glossy tresses, and half-hid
Amid the fleecy drapery of her robe,
Were damask roses placed. Her arms were claspt
With jewelled bracelets, and her sumptuous neck
Girt by a shining necklace. Hither from
The halls of revel, hasted Rudiger,
His beauty whetted to a keener edge
By the excitement of the night, — each line
Of his seductive and impassioned face
Touched into splendid radiance. As he sank
Upon a silken cushion at her feet,
She seemed to thrill beneath his smile and touch,
As a smooth lake stirred by her lover breeze.

She placed a parchment in his hand, and spoke.
"I know thy restless craving for a boon
From thy cold mistress, Fame, who chary is
Of granting to her lovers any suit.
Thy loyalty and zeal, sir, do deserve
More gracious treatment from the haughty dame;
And so I've begged this of her hoarded stores.
'Tis thine. Ah! but I do believe I am
As much a statesman as the best of you,
I can discern who will grace offices.
My father's daughter gifts thee with the seal."

A glad thought blazed, like a far-piercing star,
In either eye, as he perused the page.
It was commission to a coveted
Appointment, after which he had aspired.
He seized her hand, and branded there a kiss.
Her red lips trembled, and her downcast eyes
Were veiled by their thick lashes, but he knew
Those orbs were brimmed with passion's rising flood
That dared not burst its confines, chafing 'neath
Its trembling barrier, those rosy lids.
Her throbbing hand lay revelling in his.
The ~~surge~~ flood, that all her being in its ~~flood~~ surge
To deluge threatened, to its fountain back
She forced, and sealed it with her woman's pride.
He was not niggard of his soul's delight,
But told his gratitude with tireless zeal;
And wistful love might easily mistake
His ardor for its coveted response.

"Methinks I am," he said, with look around,
"At Juno's very throne; or else it is
That younger goddess, Flora, who reigns here.
Thine, lady, is the royal court of flowers!
Teach me their language. I would fain be skilled
In their sweet lore to hold commune with them."

"What do they teach? Full many a lesson, sir.
Humility and patience; — for though man
Crush their frail forms beneath his heavy tread,
From their bowed heads still sweeter perfumes rise, —

Their only murmur is their fragrance. Thus
They are like holy martyrs from whose lips,
E'en at the stake, came only blessed prayers.
This is their patience. Their humility
They show by blooming all unsought along
The dusty road-side, in the beggar's path,
Though cared by queens and nourished daintily
In royal gardens. Then they teach
Their grandest precept when they fade;
For, though their fragile petals wither, and their stalks
Succumb to autumn's cruel, nipping frosts,
'Tis but destruction's semblance, for the germ
Still lives to be regenerate in spring.
It is an adumbration of man's soul,
Yearly repeated by the lovely race."

"The flowers, though artless, lady, yet are wise.
The innocent pleaders have secured a voice
To urge their cause, that shall bewitch all ears.
I once possessed a friend who loved the flowers
As a warm girl, nor thought it any stain
Upon his manhood that he tended them."

"Ah! he, meseems, knew what it is to lie
Out in the woods all day upon the moss,
Beneath a tangled shade, where arching boughs
Are bent by the wild grape-vine's festoon and
The feathery clematis; knew how sweet
The sympathy of flowers in idle hours,
How they steal in on summer solitude,
And hallow contemplation's solemn mood.

But, sir, your friend? For, if I heard aright,
The flowers he loved now watch upon his grave.
Sadly you spoke, and in the past."

"I did.

This sphere holds but his clay and memory now.
Few truly knew him, and those loved him well.
The world calls him a dead enthusiast,
Who fused his life in visionary schemes;
And a cold sneer distorts its hateful face
When it names him, or any soul akin.
Had he but willed, he might have writ his name
On Time in characters so blazing as
Would have struck blind the world's envious eyes."

"He was such, and yet wielded not his powers?
Died he so young, or failed, by love enthralled?"

"Before his prime he fell; yet not so young
But that some years of action had been his,
Had he so listed. Lady, he was one
Cast out of place upon this barren age.
Thus would he speak to me with quivering lips,
And eyes half bursting with indignant fire,
Like sun-struck dew-drops with quick flashing rays:
'Whene'er a soul, fresh from the hand of God,
On which the snowy flakes of purity
Rest thick, unmelted; yearning after love,
Which pants for generous intercourse with man,
Unselfish sympathy, and perfect truth;
Whene'er a soul, burdened with such high hopes

And aspirations, shrinks away from men,
Abhorring guilty pleasures, sensual lusts,
And brutal passions, they will sneer, and flout,
And fling at him their ribald jests and scoffs,
And brand him with some coarse, injurious name.
Whenever such a soul lifts up its voice,
And cannot be induced by aught to cede
Its innocence or honor to the world,
Living in holy visions of a state
Where sin-enslaved humanity may be
Freed from its sin-forged chains, and rise into
Its pristine perfectness and uprightness;
Men call it visionary, weak or crazed,
Romantic, spiritual, and laugh to scorn
Its pure and holy aspirations.
Such
A spirit, then, must sicken and despair,
And wither in earth's uncongenial air.
'Neath Spezia's waters such a spirit sank.'
Then in remonstrance would he turn to me.
'You, Rudiger, e'en you, my well-loved friend,
You smile in unbelief; not at these views, —
"It is impracticable," is your plea.
"If it could be," you say, "'twere well the world
Became the seat of universal love
And peace and holiness, — the earth entire
Must first pass through the Judgment flames, as through
A furnace, e'er it come out cleansed and fair,
A worthy vessel for abiding love."
This cold deliberate reasoning killeth me.

Why may not man with one great struggle plunge
Into the pool which Mercy stirreth, and
Be healed of his putrescent leprosy!'
Thus, lady, would he plead for hours with me."

"But, could you not," said Adelaide, "pluck off
The cloud that rested on his reason so?
It would have been a most sweet labor to
Have rescued such a nature from despair."

"'Twas my ambition. I untiring strove;
But though he listened meekly to me, I
Might just as soon have rent the heavens as
Have pierced his soul with one ray of my faith,
That all things are in God's great wisdom for
Some final good which man cannot foresee.
'Tis hard for any to acquire such faith,
This most perplexing of God's mysteries,
How sin hath grown so giant-like in the
Great universe where He doth reign supreme.
Indeed, it seemed almost a sacrilege
To strive to argue his pure soul out of
Its holy faith, in which he stood so firm.
He stood upon a lofty capital,
As 'twere, apart from men, — in solitude, —
Nor stood he there in pride, but lowly, with
His head bowed down in sweet humility."

"And how," she asked, "then, do you construe such
A riddle of humanity as this?"

"Perchance, it was God's purpose to display
To evil man a holy human soul
Clothed in its pristine purity, e'en such
As the first man's, ere sin had rooted from
Its virgin soil its native innocence;
That we might measure fairly the extent
Of the world's lapse in sin, in sin so foul
That pure souls wither in its deadly air
As in a pestilent miasm, and faint
And perish in its noisome atmosphere.
A fearful warning 'twere, did man reflect."

"Did the cold blasts and pestilential winds
Of the world's scornful mocking, howling round
His lonely pillow with dry withering sweep,
Torment him sorely till he sank o'ercome;
Or, as in time of drought, plants die for lack
Of rain, died he for dearth of sympathy?"

"He died as he had lived, poor lonely one!
At midnight, in a fierce, terrific storm,
His life of pain, in pain still, slowly ebbed.
It seemed as if the world, which e'er had been
Cheerless and hard to him, had striven to wear
Its dreariest look to worry his last hours.
Rains beat, and mocking winds howled o'er his head.
'Midst all, sad smiling, gentle, calm, he lay;
His last word, tender, mournfulest regret
For all the sin-born miseries of men.
Then in the loud shriek of a cruel blast
His sick soul fled all weary from its clay."

"'Tis pitiful, — 'tis woful. If his life
Should teach this lesson you ascribe to it,
He with some power should have been gifted to
Enforce the moral upon man, whereas
He was reviled and flouted both in life
And death."

"Ah! lady, there should need no sign
More sure than the plain contrast of his life
With the immedicable murrain of
A worldling's worthless, execrable days.
He was but one of myriad signs akin,
As bright and as conspicuous as the stars."
His face was earnest with his earnest theme.
A thoughtful pause, and he began again: —

"See yon light, fleecy clouds chase through the sky
As faint dim visions through a maiden's dreams, —
And the stars trembling like the soul-lit eyes
Of the fair shapes that flutter through her sleep.
Didst ever, lady, think how heroes' names,
Though shining through the mist of centuries, —
Which throes of nations, toppling thrones, and all
Th' events of history obscure and cloud, —
Are still as bright as if but yesterday
Their glorious deeds had made the world stand still?
Ah! Fame thou art a faithful-mistress yet!
Mad words and passionate breath, fair lady, may,
Stormily beating on the yielding heart
Of a warm maiden, win their entrance there.
The world-woo'd lady, Fame, hath not a heart

That opens to an idle lover's vows.
He who would win regard from her high eyes
Must send as messengers heroic deeds,
Or mighty mind achievements; unto such,
Whose knock shall jar the portals of her heart,
She'll hark, and open wide her brazen gates.
I woo Fame with th' immortal part of me.
All else but Fame may be mislaid by Time."

"Nay, Love outrivals Fame. Love is far more
The soul's capacity. How much you err!
What the earth would be with the flaming sun
Blazing forever on from morn to morn,
Without the respite of the grateful night
With its bland dulcet dews and softer moon, —
Whose mildly ripening rays cool off the ground
And freshen it to bear the sun's hot beams, —
Would be ambitious man, despoiled of love.
As, in such case, the soil would dry and crack,
And arid dearth would calcine earth's green breast,
So man would harden, and his soul's pure springs
Dry up and leave a burnt and barren life,
Without sweet love to water his hot heart."

Another pause, and he began again:

"List to the dial's chime. The golden hours
Have flown on rapid wings, and they behind,
Eager to see the world, do crowd them on.

They're peevish ; for, intent on other things,
If we regard them not, they swiftly speed,
Enraged by our neglect. But if the mind
Is idle and we dally with them, then
They tarry gladly, loving our regard.
They plague us with their fickle humors, and
For airy flight their golden pinions plume,
When we, in pleasure's arms, would keep them long;
But on what leaden wings they drag when pain
Or sorrow make us wish to drive them fast!

"How rich the night! how balmy is the air!
See how the glowworm's diamond sparks do shame
Yon jewel's flash. Poor stones! thus twice eclipsed;
First paled with envy by their wearer's eyes."

"You wrong them, sir; for when, a century hence,
These eyes are quenched in dull and lustreless dust,
They still will shine on in unfading light.
See, their resentment blazes from their eyes!"

"Thou errest, lady; for thou knowest that
'Tis thy pure soul that shines out from thine eyes,
And that will grow still brighter when the gems
Are melted in the ruin of the world.

"Eve's bridal night was such a one as this,
Methinks, — balm-cool with rare and incensed air.
The violet sky crowded with emulous stars,
Each palpitating to outshine its mate;

The full-orbed moon, pale in her maiden pride;
The dusky shadow of the wooded hills
Thrown o'er the tranquil plains, whose shining threads
Of moon-struck streams and crystal-breasted lakes
Decked their green beauty as with silver chains.
From spice trees, oozing out in balsam dew,
Ran fragrant gums; and all the redolent flowers
Poured out ambrosial odors, which the breeze
Bore to the joyous pair's decked bridal bower.
Then the young nightingale's melodious note
To ringing hymneal hymn attuned,
While murmurous woods, and amorous-sighing shrubs,
The chorus joined that hailed a race's birth;
And angels, wandering through the dewy groves,
With spirit-music swelled the harmony."

And so their converse ranged from theme to theme;
And so the hours slid on, those fair night hours,
Till passion grew into their beings and
Uprose upon their lips.
In after time
He never could recall how it befell,
As it too surely did, that he was borne,
In the strong grasp of passionate frenzy, to
The treacherous troth he plighted there to her,
The fatal falsehood of his drunken sense.
But she was beautiful and fond, and he
Was man; and, oh! the night was fair.
The summer air was swooning with delight,
And tremulous with passion every breath.
Temptation came; and he, oh, man! was false!

"This breast Elysium — nectar this close kiss —
Another — 'tis the gods' immortal food."

"Sweet dreaminess."
"Thine eyes I drink."
"Thus — Thus."

Oh! fragrant kisses blown by summer winds!
Oh! passionate kisses pressed by falsest lip!
Oh! listening summer air, bear not to her,
The true and trusting maiden, distant far,
The faintest echo of those kisses false,
Nor breathe the murmurings of his perjured lips!

'Twas o'er. Ambition tempted him in passion's guise;
And he, ambition's slave, by passion fell.

IV.

As, on a fair, unclouded, sunny day,
Full of sweet summer light and dreamy shade, —
Which seems a golden doze of basking earth, —
A sudden storm bursts black with hurricane;
So, o'er the summer morning of her heart,
Broke on Sybilla the confirmed report
That Rudiger had wedded Adelaide.
They had not told her half before she paled
And drooped; there was no need to tell the rest.
She sank resistless, nerveless, 'neath the blow.
Her cold, white face looked like a lily bruised
And broken by the cruel, pelting hail.
There was no moan, no frenzy of despair;
But by the piteous wailing of her eyes,
The dumb grief of that wild and startled stare,
You only saw how deeply, surely had
The blight struck to her heart.
The light of joy
Ne'er shone within those violet eyes again.
Not that she never smiled again; her lips

Were slow to lose their native habitude;
But the sweet eyes were loyal to her grief.
Woe christened them from thenceforth with her name.
How much she suffered never any knew;
But when she wandered far into the woods,
And tarried long, till watchful love sought her,
They found her laid on beds of leaves or moss,
With fixed eyes peering on some glimpse of sky
Through the dense foliage; so motionless
And pallid, that they alway were affright,
And scarcely dared to stir her, lest a touch
Should their worst fears confirm, and prove her dead.
They found her often so by starlight, at
Her casement, gazing on the midnight sky
With set and rigid face. Whenever they
Broke in upon her revery at these times,
She wore a look of such strange beauty that
They all were hushed and awed, and walked away
With noiseless step, and a dim sense of pain.
She often came home from long, lonely walks,
With the calm rest and thoughtful eyes of one
Who comes from Nature, soothed and comforted.

Thus wore the summer. When the autumn came
She weakened fast, and every day she blanched
A shade more white, a shadow thinner shrank,
And feebler waxed her little stock of strength;
Until one night in utter weariness
She went to rest, and, when the morning came,
Was powerless to rise, nor seemed to know

The usual hour had come. And there she lay
Without a murmur, yielding like a flower,
When crushed to death, her pure soul's balmiest,
Most exquisite rare perfume round the wreck
Of her decaying form; still lovelier grew
As Death approached, as does a summer day
Each moment fairer wax in sunset's dyes
Till it is lost in darkness.
Through her eyes
Her gentle spirit fled, and gave no sign.
The watchers wist not when she passed away.
Love's hands laid her all tenderly to rest
And heaped the sod above her virgin form,
Then sent to Rudiger, with breaking hearts,
A letter she had written ere she died.

It so befell that he was absent when
The post arrived, and unto Adelaide
By dangerous chance the letter was consigned.
Thralled in the first intoxicating spell
Of wedded love, in its fruition blest, —
Which of a woman's whole existence is
Her season of most deep enrapturement, —
Was Adelaide; her sun of happiness,
High in its zenith, blazing on her heart
With full bliss-quickening beams.
There is a pang
Deep hidden down in passion's secret core,
A purple stain upon its rosy leaf,
A sweet sting smiting on its rapture, which

Seems a mysterious monitor, to warn
That love engenders pain; and Adelaide,
Pondering and wondering oft o'er her delight,
Had felt this prescience keen. Why was it that
This formless trouble stirred within her heart
When she took up that letter? To be sure
'Twas superscribed in a small, feminine hand
But that was scarcely cause for wonder. Pshaw!
She smiled at her own curiosity,
And put the letter by. Mysterious fate,
Or strange persistence of a woman's heart
In what has touched it, — whatsoe'er it was, —
The tantalizing wish returned to know
What woman wrote to Rudiger; she paused
To think in wonder on the strangeness of
Her eagerness; but still it stronger grew,
Till she, scarce conscious, held the letter up
Before the light and took a stealthy peep.
That which she saw there seemed to blind her, for
She dashed her hand across her eyes as if
To clear her vision; for a curl of hair
Was visible within the envelope.
Caution or hesitation now she flung
From her, and, with a short choke, broke the seal.
What a fierce shudder shook her every inch
As her shocked, frighted soul the import gained
Of that astounding, fatal page. She sat
A moment silent, with thick, muddied brain,
As one who, conscious of a stunning blow,
Yet knows not clearly how nor whence it came;

Then rose unsteadily on tottering feet,
And staggered like a lost, bewildered child,
Confused, benighted, puzzled, in a maze.
At length, the little white and fluttering sheet, —
The puny weapon which had dealt the blow, —
Falling from her clenched hands, attracted her.
She pounced upon it, and, with set teeth, read
Its every word from first unto the last.

"You are forgiven!
Though your crime has killed
My body, it can never kill my love.
She, whom you've wedded, loves you, I have heard.
My soul's miraculous vision shows me, near
To death, your perjured heart still mine, not hers;
Her wrong, by your false vows, is worse than mine;
Your base deceit to her more criminal
Than your desertion of my broken heart.
Protect her alway from a knowledge of
The woful truth. Unto this trust be true!
This your atonement for your sin to me,
Make her as happy as I might have been.
Then, in the great hereafter when we meet
And stand on fair and equal footing, then,
Choose thou between her and
Sybilla."
With
A sudden deluge the fell, damning truth
Rushed over her, — she comprehended all.
Her first emotion was an instinct which

Forbade her doubt a solitary word.
She crouched upon the floor in agony.
Her high-reared fane of love, a moment since
Which towered into th' Elysian skies of bliss,
Into a desolate, blackened ruin changed!
Her proud and passionate heart, given wholly up
To love, had only love on which to lean;
That failing, it in utter ruin fell.
It was as if a flood, risen in one night,
Had swept away the sole supporting piers
On which the arches of a stately bridge
Were rested, and the early morning saw
The wondrous fabric tumbled in the stream.
But pride soon rose and to her rescue came,
As come forth stalwart workmen to repair
The devastation of the flood; and with
Its ready help she gathered up herself,
And quitted the abasement of her grief.
The streets of Carthage felt no haughtier feet, —
When royal Dido, mad, forsaken queen,
Fixed in dire purpose of most proud revenge,
Turned to her palace from Eneas' ships, —
Than spurned the floor of Adelaide's boudoir.
Moaning, and muttering upbraiding sharp,
She trod and trod its dreary bounds for hours.

"Three days ere he return," — and must she wait
Three mortal days before she may outpour
On his false head her scathing storm of curse!
What misery she saw in store for her.

"To live three days thus wronged and unavenged;
And through the wakeful watches of three nights
'Twixt frantic passions to be tost and torn!"
And thus the day waned, and came darkness on.

In the dark watches of the sleepless night,
There loomed afar to her, o'er the dark waste
Of misery, a dim and feeble hope.
How eagerly she clutched at the frail stay!
"Might not this letter with its story be
The spiteful forgery of some cunning foe;
Or, if not that, might not this girl have been
Some love-sick maid, who of a passion died
Unknown to him, unanswered, he unblamed?"
No sooner was the thought born than she rose,
Though weak and pale as from a fever couch,
And all alone, without a single soul,
Or friend or servant, set out on her way,
To solve her doubts or her worst fears confirm.

She found Sybilla's now deserted home,
Spoke with her mourning friends and learned the whole;
And never by a quiver of her lip,
Or moment's failing of the eye, gave sign
To any of her own heart's deep concern
In what they told her. In her they alone
Saw a pale lady, beautiful but cold,
Who listened to the sad recital of
Sybilla's story, all without a tear, —
And wondered at the strange composure of

A lady who had come so far to ask
For every circumstance, e'en most minute,
Of the whole piteous romance. When all
Was told, she thanked them very quietly,
And with a voice so freezing and so harsh,
They felt almost insulted at what seemed
Her idle curiosity, and lack
Of human sympathy, and turned from her
With looks of cold mistrust and roused dislike.
She noticed nothing of it all; — her mind
Intent upon the one absorbing theme,
This confirmation of her direst fears.
In after time, when they had learned her name,
They better knew the piteous symptoms of
A proud, insulted heart's reserved despair.

She reached her home again before the night,
More pale than when she set forth in the morn,
But otherwise to prying eyes unchanged.
It was a damp, gray, dreary day, in which
The winds wailed dismally, as if in pain,
Through the wet, dripping boughs, that weeved and moaned
And swayed as if in reeling agony;
And o'er the sunless world the sombre clouds
And the impenetrable rain-mists lowered:
So down upon her hapless, wretched heart
There settled the oppressive, woful truth,
That a dark, stalking shadow had obscured
The perfect bliss of her life's shadeless dream.

That night she caught an hour's feverish sleep,
From which she woke with wild, sharp mutterings.
But still, 'mid all the chaos of her soul,
Hope, the last fragment of a woman's heart,
That stays when all the rest is rent away,
Swept toward her one last remnant of the wreck,—
A poor, forlorn hope for a rescue from
Destruction. If but Rudiger could prove
That love untamable for her had made him false
Unto Sybilla, though that treachery
Were base and despicable, yet, she thought,
What woman would not look with pity on
The criminal who sins for love of her!
She did not promise to forgive him then,
But 'twas a buoy for her sore, fainting soul
Wrecked in this desert ocean of despair.

The third day he returned.
She heard his voice
Ring in the hall below, — a tremor shook
Her woman's heart, — she trembled fearfully, —
Then, rising, with an effort mastered the
First impulse of her nature, and called up
Her pride and memory of her great wrong.
A servant sought her, sent by Rudiger, —
And gathering round her form her velvet shawl,
Whose silken fringes swept the marble floor,
Thrilling with inward passion, outwardly
Pale, tearless, cold, clad in her pride and scorn,
She went to meet him with majestic gait.

In the oaken hall he stood, but altered much
From the impassioned youth who gained the love
Of sweet Sybilla but a few years since.
His figure was erect, symmetrical,
But early lacked its youthful roundness; and
His face, though not compressed, was harder than
His years would warrant; firmer were the lines
About his mouth, and more compressed his lips.
But in his eyes the change was wondrous; for
Their fervid gleams were quenched, and in their stead
A luminous and steady flame burned like
The white glare of the streaming Northern Lights.
He met her thus, and bent his smiling eyes
Gently upon her, and their glances crost
Like swords; upbraiding and unblenching hers.
In gathering astonishment he spoke.

"'Twould seem that I were Gorgon-eyed, to turn
The empress of my home thus into stone, —
What does this cold, petrean figure bode?
Is this my Adelaide, my welcome this?"
His tones of music seemed to fire her blood,
And loosed her tongue shut in a frozen vice.

"Thy home! Home is the heart's abode.
Is this thy home; hast thou that title here?"

His wonder grew to anger rapidly.

"What mean these strange and most intemperate words,

Which, you to utter, me to hear, degrade;
What is this desperate, this —— dramatic mood?"
He scarce repressed an irritating sneer.
'Twixt indignation all unutterable,
And wrath ineffable, she stood transfixed.
She, the accuser, into culprit changed!
He, the accused, assuming all the judge!
Was she so weak and utterly powerless;
Wronged near beyond expression, and by him;
He, guilty both of base deceit to her
And fatal falsity unto another, yet
Unmoved, superior even to her charge?
And, most exasperating thought of all,
He, the transgressor, to rebuke her!
Here
Endurance left her, and she fairly gasped,
"Nay! then, Sybilla!"
At the name he turned.
Here was the key, then — Adelaide had heard,
At last, how much he did not dare to think;
But, plainly, she was jealous. Well! he had
Foreseen this long, and was not unprepared
For a hard storm. He braced himself against
The tempest's fury, —
"Well, then, what of her?
But, tell me not! It irks me so to hear
A jealous girl's suspicions, gathered from
Some idle gossip, that I'll leave you till
You convalesce from this delirium.
Adieu! and — call the doctor!"

With no word
She tost to him the letter, and sank down
Upon a couch, and fastened on his face
An unmoved look.
He quickly turned aghast
To see Sybilla's well known characters;
But still he nerved himself to read. He read;
His face turned ghastly with the hue of death.
Scarce breathing, — while his icy, frozen glare
Of horror, and despair, and hopelessness,
Fell on her in its helpless anguish, — one
Low moan rose upward from his strangling heart.

She could not fail, with love's keen, sharpened eye
Intent upon his features, to discern
Each faint emotion that was shadowed there.
How could she, then, mistake the accents of
A wakened heart's despairing utterance?
In that one moment all the truth was shown.
A swell of choking woe, exasperate rage,
Of deadly indignation and despair,
O'erwhelmed her, and beat back her rising curse.
With one fierce glance at her from glazing eyes,
He turned away his wild, distorted face,
And rushed out desperate.
The lady stood,
And glared at where he disappeared, her wrath
Checked midway in its fury by her grief —
The fire of outraged love, insulted pride,
The passion of roused female frenzy, hot,

Scorching her breast and searing all her brain.
A moment in this posture, after he
Had left her, stood she ; then, as storm-tossed trees,
After the tempest's rage is spent, begin
To droop and languish, while hang listlessly
Their strained, drenched branches, she
No longer by his presence stirred, as by
A goading gale, sank prostrate on the floor.
She lay there till approaching footsteps warned
Her chafing to be seen thus, and, though faint
And weak, with haughty step she gained her door.
There from all human eyes secreted, down
She sank unbraced and shattered.
Oh, God ! Now
Thought chased thick, horrid phantoms through her brain.
Where was her heart's resource, that iron pride
She thought to find an all-sufficient stay
On which to lean in such an hour as this !
That passionate heart of hers, once roused to love,
Must have thenceforth forever some strong rock
On which to spend its heaving billows, or
Wear itself out in endless dashings wild.
Poor tortured soul ! Poor hungry, aching heart !
That hour was past on which her life was staked,
And she had lost.
With a low, fearful cry,
She wildly fell on supplicating knees
Before her mother's portrait, in despair.
Through blanched and piteous lips she faintly wailed
And in the sweet tongue of her mother moaned.

"Oh! Madre, Madre!" still she sobbed and moaned.
All through the long, long night, stretched on the floor,
Beneath those dark and pitying eyes she lay,
And, "Madre, Madre!" the faint sobbing came.

V.

The sultry day was fainting fast to death.
The torrid sky, like heated copper, beat
Down heavily upon the feverish earth,
As a dull headache presses on the brain ;
The breezeless atmosphere was stagnant, and
With hot and hazy vapor steamed and smoked.
The torpid moon hung green and livid in
A mouldy cloud, as in a festering shroud,
Through which her blank and ghastly beams looked dim,
And clad the earth in sickly, loathsome light.
The stars, yestreen that twinkled joyously
Down from their thought-high summits, sparsely now
Were glimmering with dull, lack-lustre rays,
And feeble flicker.
Sweating Nature lay
And reeked and panted, longing for the storm
To bound down from the thunder-cloud, as leaps
A fierce beast from his den foul with his breath.

Distracted by Remorse and Conscience, — worn,

Foot-sore and haggard, — pale with sleeplessness
And travel, — with the wild delirium
Of guilt, of love bereft, and raving o'er
That castaway and murdered love, by stealth
And darkness Rudiger stole cowering back
To his youth's home, made forfeit by his crime.
He stood and glared with igneous eye upon
The sky, and uttered fiercely, huskily,
"Why linger there, thou storm! Come down and bring
The spirits of the damned that in thee hide,
And let them loose upon my cursed head!
Storm fiends, attack me here!
Oh, challenge vain!
They mock and grin at me, but will not fall
Upon me with their fury, and smite dead.
Exulting in my pain with horrid scoffs,
They will not ease my misery by death.
Ye mouthing, damnéd imps, why, then, abide,
And with your smothered venom strangulate!

"Why do I stay from hurling myself down
This precipice, that yawns so dark and deep?
There is no chasm deep or dark enough
In which to hide me from eternity,
Or in which I can lose this guilty soul!
My crime makes Immortality a curse!
Time's soothing balm, which healeth angry wounds,
Can never close this ulcer in my soul.
I'd strive to cheat myself into belief
That the soul dies with this vermivorous clod,

But obstinate reason will not suffer me.
Oh! Wretch, self-tricked! Where is ambition now
That drove me on to this? The trickster's fled
And left me in my dire extremity.
'Tis just that treason's edge is turned on me.

"Oh God! Eternal art Thou, and, they say,
Eternally art just, and orderest all!
Didst Thou create me for damnation, then;
And was I then, from the beginning, doomed
To sin, and fall, and to inherit hell;
A plaything made by Thee to serve Thy end,
Meant to be broken, when that end is served,
The fragments to be flung aside in hell?
No! Flimsy pretext of excuse! I feel
In this mad, cowering Conscience all the shame,
And see the blush of guilt it cannot hide.
Straight on to hell the current drifts me fast;
In hell I will not deign to mingle with
Those coward fiends who cast the blame of their
Damnation on their Maker. I will sit
Apart, a solitary demon, while
My great crime, and my moanless fortitude,
Shall give me lofty place there. Even ye,
Earth's oldest, earliest dead, long ages since
Damned in the infancy of Adam's race,
I'll teach another pang in sin's remorse."

His grim face darkled with a look as black

As ever mortals wore. Remorse itself,
Robed in the ghastly mantle of despair,
Dwelt in his soul.

"But for this mortal term —
How shall I pass it; what my business here?
My idols once can be such never more.
This dreadful quake of sin has hurled them down,
And altered the whole color of my life
To ashen gray from golden. Naught but ruth
Can from the dying embers of my heart
Be sifted out. Nepenthe there is none.
I'll go," — a sullen purpose glimmered o'er
The deep eclipse of his remorseful soul, —
"I'll roam this desert earth in quest of change,
A felon sentenced, waiting for my doom.
If Death arrest me on my pilgrimage
And bear me to my punishment full soon,
'Twere better so, to die at least were change."
He cast his hopeless eyes around.

"Oh, God!"
He groaned, "when last I trod this steepy slope
Love and Ambition shone upon my soul,
And their rays crossed, although methought they blent.
Both now forever vanished!"

A hard storm
Of passionate remorse drove over him.
Prone on the earth and clutching at the clods,
He lay convulsed and quivering.

"I will once
Stand by thy virgin grave, my murdered love."

He rose to go, when in his path appeared
Old Meg and hissed her horrid hate in taunts.

"E'en in the shroud wouldst rob her of all peace?
What shouldst thou do, thou murderer, at her grave?
Ah, yes, you writhe! She did not, not a groan;
She only faded, blasted by your love.
These eyes beheld her wilting, even these,
And this seared heart awoke to pity her;
Once more in life it knew a human throb.
The grave-mould clouds her eyes, if worms have spared.
Yes, slimy worms now tear her virgin flesh,
And feast, luxurious, on her tender limbs.
Methinks they should be grateful to thee for
The dainty banquet, for thou sent it them;
But they are treacherous, for they'll feed on you
One day; but treachery will turn on them,
For your polluted clay will poison them."

His frenzied glare, that surely had appalled
Aught but a witch like her, was horrible.
In sudden rage the coward wish arose
To deal a deadly blow upon a thing
So foul. Remorse alone restrained
His quivering hand, fierce throbbing for the stroke.
Pale with deep hatred and unutterable wrath,
He turned to go, lest his wild, coward rage
And thirst for vengeance, — that delirious wish
To smite and slay, of the near-frenzied soul,
Which monstrous insult and indignity sting, —

Should urge him to th' unmanly, dastard act.
She saw his sore temptation and deep wrath,
And th' impotent detestation in his face,
And laughed a laugh of taunt and devilish glee.
He stood in speechless horror, stony still.
The hag clomb up a cliff that hung above
The path where she had fallen on Rudiger,
And tossed her long, gaunt arms, and yelled at him.
He fled on swiftly, but he dared not go
Unto the grave; so on he fled, nor paused
Until he reached the bleak and barren coast.
Far o'er the waters out to sea he gazed.
He saw naught but a dreary, boundless waste,
Beaconless, hopeless, rayless, desolate;
And one lone ship, like his unresting soul
At anchor in the harbor of despair.
His grim conceit he fixed upon that ship, —
That ship should bear him on his pilgrimage.

VI.

Sunset was blushing o'er far Ocean's waste.
The glowing orb, that dipped below the wave,
A sheen of glory o'er the waters cast,
And went superbly down with princely pace.
He left a thousand lingering splendors on
The waters trembling, dimpling 'neath his smile,
Reflecting back his parting look of love.

Soon twilight's russet baldric zoned the heavens.
The moon was not yet risen, but the stars
Assembled on the sky's cool evening fields,
And danced and flickered with a tremulous joy.
Night's slanting shadows, like tall dusky spears,
Glanced darkling down and cut the silent waves.

A stately ship held on her lonely course.
Through her dim shrouds the night-birds of the sea
With heavy flapping darted, and dull scream,
And brushed the sails with their wide-fanning wings.
This, blending with the dreary, stridulous jar

And shudder of the wind-struck shrouds, and the
Masts' dismal creak, made harsh discordancy.
Mute, motionless, and brooding, at the poop
Sat Rudiger alone, with bent, dark brow,
And eyes still darker glancing in the wake.
The words fell hoarsely from his stony lips.

"Night on the waters, night upon my soul!
Dead, sullen night broods ever on my soul!
The waves sleep cold and dark; how cold and dark
They sweep above the heads of myriads wrecked!
How calm and peaceful lie the dead below,
Unheeding all, e'en this black load of sin
That floats above their deep and silent beds.
Oh, death! I envy them!
Ye treacherous waves,
I long to see ye rise and shake yourselves,
Like a strange, mighty monster, roar and rage
And swell in turbulence, and lash the stars
Till they retreat before your rude assault,
And leave the world in pitchy darkness; then
Attack the shore and tear that paramour's
Caressing breast, until she bleed and cringe
Beneath the pain. Why, this most flattering earth,
Embracing ye with all her thousand shores,
But plays the wanton with ye, to appease,
And make ye kind to her polluted sons;
Black souls, earth's scourges, who upon thy breast
This moment plot and perpetrate vile crimes,
And ye rise not to smite them as ye might.

Me fain to die God wills to live, and so
Nor earth nor ocean yield to me a grave."
He stood convulsed; and at the sea shook his
Clenched fists; then words most horrible to hear
He spoke.
Two figures now came up on deck.
The elder was a tall, imposing man
Enveloped in an ample cloak. His mien
Was stately and commanding. Thin gray locks
Fell on his broad pale brow, 'neath which dark eyes
With an intense and steady lustre beamed.
His face wore that close, fixed suppression of
A strong expression, rather than its dearth,—
Oft seen on shut, secretive visages,—
Impenetrable immobility.
The mouth was firm, and schooled to give no key
Unto the secrets of his inner life.
A lady leant on him; tall, too, and fair,
With a white, saintly face and clear gray eyes,
And brown hair parted in smooth classic bands.
Her graceful bearing, too, was dignified,
Spite of the softness of her virgin mien.
They moved toward Rudiger, who had not stirred,
But sat and gazed with hard and stony eyes
Up at the stars. The elder spoke to him.

"How differently men look at the stars!
Some reach up to them, others hardly get
Beyond the limit of earth's atmosphere.
They who have known sore trouble, heavy hearts

Down-laden by bereavement or remorse,
Learn oftenest to peer beyond the stars;
All thoughtful and capacious souls, 'tis true,
Extend their gaze beyond this narrow world,
As well the happy, smiled upon by Fate,
As they who 'neath her iron brow despond:
But it is the peculiar solace of
World-sickened hearts for comfort to look up.
You, fellow-voyager, are clear beyond the stars!"
With chilling voice, made Rudiger reply:
"Farther the other way some souls extend,
If Hell lies downward in eternal night."
A pained look in the lady's holy eyes
Made him repent of his discourteous speech.

"Were all pure, innocent like thee, man need
No farther look for heaven than his own heart,
As thou well knowest, lady. 'Tis not so:
The most are black and foul, as thou art white
And stainless, and they find hell in their souls.
A vile deed turns a heart of love and peace
Into a turbulent sink of slime and hate,
As one small poison grain drugs a whole cup."

"And knowst thou not, sir, of the antidote,
One drop of which will rectify the cup,
And leave it pure and harmless as at first?
Man's days are passed in this alternate round
Of poisoning, and restoring his life's tone.
Sin is the poison, penitence the cure."

"The voice and thoughts of innocence again.
Though angels urge repentance upon man,
He, drop by drop, still spills the poison in,
And gradually contaminates his life
'Till 'tis as putrid as rank, stagnant pool,
So thick with filth no power can disinfect;
And all trace of its pristine purity
Evaporate and flee back to its God,
And leave the soul more foul than bilge-water.
An absolute corruption such as that
By the great law of nature sure must sink."
"Men's guardian angels on fresh stains of sin
Upon men's souls a tear of pity drop, —
Which often will efface the taint, for God
Regards in mercy weak humanity.
Repentance and appeal to the Lord Christ
Will surely wipe away blots deepest set."

"Sweet lady, faith so pure befits your soul.
The guardian angels of full many men
Flee from them, outraged by their arrant crimes.
Who then doth shed the neutralizing tear,
Or stir th' abandoned soul to penitence?
'Tis fearful, maiden; you, so innocent,
Had you world-knowledge such as mine, would shrink
And quake and wither at the dreadful truth,
The black sin-depths of our humanity.
On every side, o'er this entire fair globe,
Stalks man in closest company with Sin.
You walk upon life's busy, brisk highway,

Still Sin is at man's elbow unrebuked,
And he lists to his counsels yieldingly,
And Satan's hate doth pass into his breast."
A troubled look rose in the maiden's eyes.

"Those angels ne'er desert men utterly.
Some memories of love and purity
Still cling to every humanity.
Though many bar the sacred spirits out,
They yet will linger, and go sometimes in
To hearts in last extremity of sin."
Fervent belief was on her earnest face
And gilt her raptured eyes with holy light.

"Faith," said her sire, "is the possession of
Some favored souls. Because you have it not,
Wield not your spade of unbelief to root
From her heart's soil its native growth of faith."

Instinctively the youth shrank, and forbore
To hurl back his soul's bitter answer, which
Would have too sorely stung the maiden's breast
By its mad daring and profane assault
Of her heart's darling trust. He sat quite mute,
And gazed with sullen and half fearful eyes
Back on the vessel's troubled, foaming trail.
The sage, his eye intently fixed upon
The face of Rudiger, addressed him thus:

"An angry wrinkle on the sleeping sea

We leave, as a weak insect, crawling o'er
The face of a strong man, relapsed in dreams,
Wakes a disturbed, though an unconscious, frown.
With what ease, waking, he might crush the gnat
Might the roused ocean overwhelm our ship.
We draw a wake as stormy as some men
Leave on the dreary waste of life. It is
A rich and most suggestive theme for thought;
Most rich for him who has left many years
Behind him in his life's rough passage."

Slow,
Through clammy lips, the joyless answer came.
"A past misdeed rides ghastly on these waves, —
Which in oblivion's waters will not sink, —
As a stark corpse, whose grave old ocean was,
Risen and swollen to gigantic size,
Rides upright in the ship's wake, frighting souls
Of daring tars, as it comes stifly on,
And haunts the vessel with its fearful form."

"Now, one, from that strained stare, would fancy that
You saw the spectre now, that your few years
Were freighted with experience such as moulds
Your sombre fancy into real form."

"A word," he muttered hoarsely, "were enough,
The footfall of the lightest word, to start
Down from the soul's high, lonely mountain-tops
An avalanche of memory, before

Whose sweep all living thoughts are rooted up;
Which leaves behind it utter barrenness
On which henceforth no mortal joy may sprout."

"That memory must be o'erladen, then,
With the remorse for some inhuman crime.
No crime, scarce one like Judas's, can scorch
The soul to a dead, hopeless cinder, which
The breath of penitence and true remorse
May yet not fan into a living coal.
Contrition's a deft handmaiden to relight
And kindle up the dying flame of peace."

"Some crimes there are which whelm their workers in
Inevitable damnation, — think not else.
As for most poisons is an antidote,
Yet, if the venom of the foaming dog
Infect the blood once, what will kill the taint?
The soul, sin-crusted, blossometh no more
Than the baked lava plains, round Etna's mouth,
Yield the rich fruitage of New England meads:
If a wild schemer seeks to till such ground,
The wretch dies delving at his fruitless toil."

The maiden shuddered at these desperate words,
And rose and went below, while Rudiger
Pursued the tenor of his wretched thoughts;
And when, exhausted by his ravings, he
Paused breathless, thus the sage addressed him.

"Youth!
Your words are dark and hint at awful crimes.
Sorrow could ne'er have crushed you so, nor care;
Remorse for a misdeed, or many, like
God's brand upon Cain's brow, is burnt upon
The forehead of your soul. I know the mark.
Th' inflexible justice of the courts of heaven
Has fixed the woful consequence of sin,
Remorse, upon the malefactor, and
Has made atonement for his sin on earth
Inevitable; which, if penitence
Give strength, with patience and humility,
To suffer, soon, like a grim jailer, Death
Unlocks his prison gates, and he goes forth
Into the sinless airs of heaven, where Christ,
The great Atoner, waits his penitents.
When your accusing soul has lashed itself
Into exhaustion, then reaction may
Ensue, and with it the conviction, — which
Upon God's warrant you must recognize, —
That you, through Christ, may win your rescue yet."
Apostle-like his words, and mien benign.

"Tell me this first, ere thus you bid me hope;
Will the red, hungry ranks of seething hell
E'er throng the white and silver courts of heaven?
Will Satan wear his crown of light again?
His is my case; and this is the fine straw
You toss within the drowning wretch's clutch.
When the fell, furtive, vengeful foe of God, —

The unrelenting, rancorous lord of hell,
Who, in defeat disastrous reareth yet
His glory-shorn but daring head against
His supernal King, in unsubmissive pride,—
When he is blest, then there is hope for me.
This is most wondrous comfort, solace rare."

"Nay! nay! wild, mad, rash soul, this is sin's most
Pernicious, fatal blight, to warp and cloud
The reason thus with its curst, loathsome film,
Until it droop and languish, withering
Like roses cramped in baleful spider's web;
Else you'd not venture to compare your crime
With that revolt infernal which to hell
Drove the seditious fiend. What mortal man
Has power to sin as had that seraph, who,
Once high in heaven, rebelled against his God,
And for his crime was hurled to that bad eminence,
The throne of hell, in endless banishment?

"But for the atonement of our Lord, 'tis true,
The punishment attached to a misdeed
Into the misty future farther might
Outstretch, than man's extreme capacity
Of thought could ever reach. But, know, His love
Divine saves man from such appalling fate,
If he but grasps the hand held out to him.
'Tis in your strait that Christ in pity most,
And mercy, looks upon the penitent.
In the dark night of self-conviction, and

The soul's despairing consciousness of sin,
His grace shines like a moon with soothing beam
And rays of love and mercy all divine.

"Time still rolls on. New things will soon be old,
Old things are growing older. Art but creates
Her monuments of beauty to augment
The heap the Judgment must destroy, and naught
Mundane is durable; but still endures
The universal love and mercy of
The Infinite. 'Tis writ on everything;
On all the variegated earth and sky,
The sun and moon, those fairest twins of space;
But first and last on man, whose intellect,
And faculty for love, can never be
Submerged in utter darkness, nor be lost.

"Youth, I have known despair as deep as yours.
The drought of sin my young years sterilized,
And turned that green and flowery mead into
A burnt and barren, desolated waste.
The traces of the desiccation, youth,
Disfigure still my life; like a hale plain
Once by the scathing elements laid waste,
Though many summers' healing, balmy breath
Has wakened it to pristine life and bloom,
Yet the black stumps, like scars on a fair face,
Tell of the tempests past to travellers.
Such peace as mine 'tis in your power to gain;
Calm strength to bear the stings of memory;

With patience and content to gather all
The sterile wastes of life in mercy yet
May yield.
Check, poor, young, blighted soul, in time,
Check this blind, headlong tempest of despair!
Poor victim of the devil's tempting craft,
Let not the fiend exult more in your fall;
A meagre triumph to the spoiler give.
Distract, remorseful, laboring, ship-wrecked soul;
Steer, storm-tossed mariner, for this friendly isle.
You may not gather flowers from its hard sides,
But 'tis a haven from the deadly storm."

He listened, passive, to the sage's words.
At times a glow would climb up to his brow,
A moment linger, then fall back again,
And leave it dark and wan as 'twas before;
As sometimes, ere the morning fairly shines
Above the eastern slopes, quick, flashing gleams
Will struggle with the cheerless dun of night,
And flush with bright but transitory ray
The sullen arch of darkness.
"I cannot
Land ever on your flattering isle of hope;
Your haven but perdition is to me.
Upon the sharp spikes of your rock of hope
My rotten bark, dashed by the waves, is split
And swamped, sucked by the hungry eddy down."

He rose, and, muttering words unmeet to hear,

Broke from the sage's long restraint of speech.
But, spite of all his unappeased despair,
When that pure stream of counsel ceased to flow
Upon his anguished head, he felt as one
Who goes from out the sunshine into shade.

'Twas later in the night, and Rudiger
Still kept his post in deep and sullen thought.
The gracious moon rode her triumphal path
Through her thick-crowding, happy subject-stars,
As once the palmy Orient's Empress through
Marble Palmyra's thronged and templed streets.
In her chaste cloak of virgin-silver light
She moved along with peerless majesty,
Not coveting Sol's royal purple robes.

The Sage joined Rudiger in his lone watch,
And in these words gave language to his thoughts.
"How beautiful the heavens in every phase!
When morn's first blush is streaming up the east,
Burnished with molten gold by garish noon,
In sunset's listed glory richly dyed,
Or dusked in pensive twilight's tender shades.
But, oh! most solemn, beautiful, sublime,
When the high hush of starlight resteth there,
And Night with muffled sandals paces on
Her noiseless way through her mute, mystic realm.
Thus, since the stars rang out earth's matin peal,
O'er the lulled globe she follows Evening with

Her silent sceptre, and th' empyrean still
Shall yield unto her empire vespertine,
'Till Heaven's trump shall rend the awful hush,
And the roused stars ring loud earth's curfew chime.
Still, still, old Night, thou speakest of thy God,
In two mysterious attributes of Him,
Silence and Mystery, which are of Him;
Eternal Silence, speaking but through signs,
And mystery too deep for man to pierce;
Thou teachest us to voice these thoughts to Him.
Thy words are worlds, an universe Thy thought,
And space a page made eloquent by Thee."

He paused, and gazing upward mutely stood,
In silent, rapt abstraction, worshipping.
It was one of those rare and blessed hours
When, 'neath the influence of nature lone,
The soul, by an instinctive reach, ascends
Into its higher, spiritual state;
And, shaking off its fleshly shackles, gains
Foreshadowings of immortality;
And takes in, with one grasp and grand soul-stretch,
A sense of God, His attributes, His plans
Revealed, and those revealing rapidly,
His love, power, and consummate majesty.
The soul gains foothold in such hours, from which
To gaze with fearless and undaunted eyes
Adown the avenue of Eternity;
A strength to meet Time's baffling questions, which,
By Revelation, is imparted thus

To those who reverently, strongly strive
To comprehend the Infinite.
When hours like these are past, men ne'er relapse
Into the utter men they were before,
But are thenceforth forever nearer God.

The bitter tones of Rudiger aroused
The rapt sage from his high abstraction.
"Wouldst
Thou hear the story of my blasted soul?"

"I've guessed already, youth, thy history;
I gathered from your ravings its main drift.
But, if it please you, I will hear the whole."

"Hear of a youth mad with his thirst for Fame,
And blinded by that master passion. He
Turned traitor to his only love, and pledged
His false faith where ambition led; nor from
His treasonous delusion waked, until
His falsitude had killed his heart's true love.
Then, coward, murderer, traitor that he was,
He recognized the doom his crime had wrought
For his own soul, eternal misery."

"One query. What of her you wedded? For,
Methinks, she was your victim too, — perchance
Most pitiable, for your deceit to her
Was meaner and more stinging. If she loved
Thee, greater was her wrong, her fate, most like,

Harder and bitterer far. And yet you say
Naught of your guilt toward her."

A direful look

Rose in the wretch's eyes.

"Poor passion's slave!

Since I rushed from thee rageful, maddened, stung
To cursing by thy fell discovery,
My heart's great woe hath banished thought of thee.
How must it fare with thee?

Oh fearful thought!

Man! man! what hast thou done; why art thou here?
Has my hell-torment even now begun;
Art thou an emissary of the devil, placed
To cross and taunt me on my way to hell?
A second thunderbolt! Wast not content
With the despair thou sawest, but must gloat
Over my writhings 'neath another pang?
Sybilla murdered by my deed, O God!
Such is my work — and Adelaide," —

"Nay, then

Sybilla's fate sits lightly on thy soul
To that of her thou namest Adelaide,
Poor wretch, deceived and cheated into love,
And then deserted and abandoned to
Despair and jealousy. If still she lives,
She is, most like, a ruined, shattered wreck,
Stung to committal of whatever rash
And fatal deed may offer first to drown
Her burning sense of wrong and injury.
Perchance she has been driven to suicide,

Or to some other uglier crime; whate'er
She does redoundeth to thy shame, thy guilt,
Thy condemnation by high Heaven."
"Hold, man!
Whither wouldst goad me? Would you have me leap
Into yon pitchy spume?"
The sage fell back
As if to give him space to do his threat.

"You will not, dare not, knowing if you do,
All hope is o'er; for thus you fling away
The time in which salvation may be wrought.
Wofully dark to-morrow looks to you;
You sorely dread it, and forebode the hours
Of torment and remorse 'twill bring to you.
It now seems lead; when it is lost beyond
Recovery 'twill seem like purest gold,
Which you flung from you and would fain have back.
'Tis now your serf from whom you may exact
Good service, — lose it, it accuser turns."

"Remorseless seer? Who made *thee* thus my judge?
Well, art thou satisfied?
You will not now
Deny that I am damned? You cannot. Speak!"

"Ay! if God lets you damn yourself. He is
Our judge; our deeds come up as witnesses
Against us, and our consciences arraign.
We stand or fall by these; and it is a

Tribunal by which all would be condemned,
Were not our judge most merciful.
You, youth,
Within sin's regions rashly ventured, and
Sin's nature is to penetrate all souls
Who trust themselves within its foul domain,
E'en those protected by the thickest coats
Of good intent, as does earth's potent damp
The strongest walls of stone and firm cement,
Invade. And those who tarry in sin's torrid clime
Must not expect to 'scape the pestilence;
So you have caught the infection hard enough
Most leeches to discourage of a cure.
Now, youth, heed closely!
Though you told not half
Your sin's enormity, — on strength of that
Your soul to hell eternal had consigned,
Yet even now, when you stand forth revealed
In this worse guiltiness, this double crime,
Yet are you not beyond the remedy.
But, youth, mistake not; do not think to 'scape
Unscathed, unharmed; that you can never do.
The pestilence will leave you marred, defaced.
Though you recover, you will come out blotched,
And stained, and scarred, by the malignant plague,
Yet glad to convalesce e'en on those terms.
Nay! nay! You cannot now see clearly through
The loathsome film and scabs, with which disease
Stops up your eyes. When they are healed, you will.
I tell thee, youth, the time is coming when,

Worn out with the mad tossings of despair,
The rage of the plague spent, you fain would smoke
The Indian calumet with Penitence,
But yield your life a deodand for sin."

He stirred not from his post through the long night,
But sat and brooded o'er his thoughts, until
The laggard sun with blank, faint beam looked forth,
Lusty and rosy red who set last night.
But with the morning's earliest light there struck
Faint, glimmering rays to his benighted soul.
It was not time yet for them to shine full
Into his soul, with radiance unobscured —
And the Sage murmured, as he met his eye, —

"'Tis well, the leaven's at work; in season due
It will ferment; leave all the work to time."

VII.

The exile landed on the lonely beach,
Whence three long years before he had embarked
In flight from maddening memories of those shores.
Washed in the tears of penitence and faith
His blinded eyes were healed to clearer sight,
And saw before his homeward way stretch plain.
A pilgrim, back across the sea he came,
To seek that shrine serene of peace and grace,
In quest of which he'd roamed the world in vain.

But not long tarried he by that bleak coast.
Although his feet now pressed the sacred soil,
He yet must journey ere the shrine be reached.
A duty for his hands delayed far in
At shore. He longed to reach its scene and know
It done; and so with resolute heart he set
His steadfast face in the direction of
The place wherein he knew that duty lay.
And as he stoutly wended thither on,
His soul stretched on, far on, before his feet.

While through the old world swiftly hurrying
With restless, feverish haste, his way had been
Revealed to him. 'Twas Adelaide he sought;
His duty lay with that proud lady; — so
On from the sea he went, nor paused until
He saw again the scenes familiar, where
He once had dwelt with her.
'Twas twilight when
The Votary came among those scenes again.
The landscape lay bathed in the amber shades
Of that grave hour, which follows at the heels
Of setting sun, — like a brown Gypsy maid,
With listless, lingering step and pensive mien,
Who saunters in a monarch's royal train,
For love of some fair youth in the gay band.
There was a tender stillness all around,
On which no worldly bustle harshly broke;
For all things human, soothed by Nature's calm
And serious brow, participated in
Her twilight hush of sweet repose and peace;
And there was rest of Nature and of Man.

A chime of vesper bells was summoning
The people to the evening service. They
In quiet converse, and with sober pace
Were strolling churchward.
Rudiger joined in
The grave and thoughtful throng. Within the church
The hues of twilight farther were subdued
By a soft, mellow light, that, streaming through

The stained panes of the chancel window, filled
The gothic aisles with a religious shade,
Half-radiant and half-sad, and stilled the soul
To peace and deep devoutness.
On his knees
The wanderer breathed his pilgrim's vows, and felt
That he had reached the shrine of grace at last.
When from his fervent prayers he raised his head,
He cast a glance across the church toward
A stall well known to him of old, and saw,
Bathed in a flood of chequered light that poured
Down from an oriel window, a white face
Of rarest loveliness, the hazel eyes
Regarding him intently.
It was she,
His wronged wife, Adelaide; their eyes revealed
The mutual recognition in one look.
A faint rose-hue stained the pure whiteness of
Her perfect face; but no excitement, or
Surprise beyond, her countenance revealed.
He was amazed by her demeanor, so
Serene and placid; and could scarce believe
That pale, calm face the haughty Adelaide's.
His eyes dwelt long upon each feature, and
Read their subdued expression, saw the trace
Of the heart-struggle that had mastered so
Their once imperious and impassioned lines;
And thought that chastened and half-mournful look
Into a higher beauty far had raised
Her features' rare perfectitude of line.

Her beauty touched and moved him now far more
Than had her proudly radiant air of old.
Beneath that smooth mask, which her woman's hand
Had hastily put on, he could not see
Her heart, — like a tamed beast, grown sudden wild, —
Turn on its keeper, nor the struggle which
Tried, to the last strain, all her woman's strength
Before she throttled the fierce creature, and
Thrust it back foaming to its chains again.
A merciful and pitying Power it is
That nerves these little, fragile, tender hands
To triumph in such furious combats as
Would sorely try the toughest masculine thews.
Ah! loving woman! Little do men reck
How often you achieve in secrecy
Such victories, and give no outward sign.

By an instinctive impulse, in the porch
They met and touched each other's palms. Again
The purity of her white face was tinged,
As closed on hers his fingers in warm clasp;
But that was all — she thrilled not now beneath
His presence and his touch as once. 'Twas plain
She was victorious o'er her passions, and
Had from the contest gained some secret power,
Which, like an amulet, preserved her from
Their sweeping onset.
Calmly by his side
She walked in silence, till he spoke.
He told

Of his long wanderings; spoke plainly of
His desperate soul that hurried him along,
Almost unheeding, through historic scenes,
And classic places, and o'er holy ground —
Which but to talk of once had set his blood
Awhirl through his tense tingling veins, but which
He hurried weary, listless, through. His soul,
In the dull lethargy of its remorse,
Woke not up to the inspiration of
Great scenes and deeds by great ones of all time,
And missed their mighty lessons.
Then he told
Of one eve when 'mid Alpine solitudes
He stood alone, so near the heavens he deemed
He felt the winds that blow among the stars.
All day amid th' eternal hills, alone,
He'd clambered venturously, with no guide.
All day his solitary soul had mused
In the sublime and awful hush of those
Calm solitudes, for ages undisturbed
By human jar from their prime quietude.
Here in great Nature's most august retreat,
Eternal silence and grand loneliness,
A keener vision poured a flood of light
In on the fearful darkness of his soul;
And all grew lucid that was black before.
The Sage's words came back then to his soul,
Like guests, who had come once, and found the hall
Unlighted, so had gone away, — but now
Returned and found it all illumined, and

So entered in. Oh, welcome, welcome guests!
Conviction hand in hand with duty came,
And, in that blessed hour, the image of
Her bruiséd heart, which it was his to heal,
Had risen before him; and, instinctively,
His own heart turned to her, and sought her from
That very hour; and had not paused till now,
This sweet hour which united them again.
Much more he said of consolation and
Of penitence, and peace and hope for her.

"If thou wilt but receive the penitent,
He comes to lay his service at thy feet.
Knowing the past, and all its history,
If thou wilt take this shattered heart to thine,
Its ruined chambers shall contain no thought
Other than faithful tenderness for thee."

She listened silently with downcast eyes,
And when he paused she raised them once to his,
And took one look down deep into his heart,
And then they fell again.
"So, thou hast come
Thy duty to perform, which undischarged
Had haunted and accused thee. It is well.
Ay, it is well. — Nay, speak not now, I pray!"
She raised her hand with supplicating air
As he essayed to speak.
"Good-night, now! Leave
Me here. To-morrow I will send to thee,

And then come to me if thou wilt. Ah, yes," —
Repeating this her sweet tones faltered, — " Yes,
If then thou canst, then come to me ! "
He looked
All the surprise and wonder in his mind.

" If thou wilt have it so, I must submit.
Good-night, my fair one, then, — all angels bless
Thy couch, and sweeten sleep with happy dreams !
Dream thou of joy to come ! But, Adelaide,
Let thy dear summons find me early out ! "

He took her hand, which she half hastily
Withdrew, but checked herself and let him press
His lips to it, — then coldly took it back.
But, as her eyes met his, she gave it back,
As if she would repair her coldness, and
She said in something tenderer tone,
" Good-night
Indeed, then, Rudiger; but, oh ! I charge
Forget not thou my words. When thou'st received
My summons, then come to me, if thou mayst."

And so they parted; he, unboding of
Aught but an early meeting in the morn;
But she with the dull, dead conviction that
It should not be, like ice chill at her heart.
Her eyes with unrestrainéd tenderness
Ran over now, as they gazed after his
Retreating form.

"The last, last look," she sighed.
"But haste, haste, hands! Your task awaits you, come!"

She hastened in.

Upon the morrow came,
At dawn, from Adelaide to Rudiger
This missive:

"Adelaide to Rudiger.

"Me, Rudiger, you wedded for your wife,
On the pretence of love as honest and
As passionate as ever man professed.
Naught else had ever won me, and naught short
Can ever hold me. Hearts like Adelaide's
Are fire and snow commingled, love and pride.
Think not so poorly of me as to deem
Your pity or your penitence could fill
The void left by your falsely plighted vows.
But stay: I do not purpose to upbraid.
This time I have anticipated long,
When you would wander back and offer to
Devote a life of penitence to me.
Although you're tardy, yet you're come at last.
This time you mean me no deceit. Your heart
Has dealt in falsehood all it ever will,
And that has wrecked it. Well do I believe
You yield allegiance to no love on earth,
Save such as pity forces you to pay
To me whom you have so insulted, wronged.

So, when you talk of love there is deceit,
Not by design, but witless, self-deceit;
For pity, and stern-purposed duty, the
Sad offsprings of your hearty penitence,
Have in atonement driven you back to me.
I've long foreseen this last sore trial.

Ah!

If I were now the being that I was,
If these years, and this hard experience, had
Not tutored me by grief's correcting hand,
And taught my passionate, rebellious heart
The dignity of patience 'neath its wrong,
And the most sweet and holy beauty of
Divine forgiveness to the wronger, — were
I the proud, restive Adelaide of old, —
With what a blast of scorn and ire should I
Have overwhelmed you, daring to seek me,
The woman you so humbled by deceit.
By suffering though cast down my pride still lives,
No more presumptuous, wicked, rearing its
Bold, unsubmissive front in face of Heaven;
But still lives on, a nobler thing than erst,
And makes a hard judge of my weak, fond heart.
Still am I Adelaide, and ne'er will stoop
To be restored through pity to the bliss
Of hearing thee claim me thine own.

No! Though

To live beneath thine eyes, to touch thine hand,
To feel thy seeking lips pressed to mine own,
To thrill with love and rapture in thine arms, —

The little circle of thy clasping arms, —
An empire richer far than earth's wide bounds,
In which I'd rather dwell sole empress, than
Reign throned in light, the queen of myriad worlds, —
Though happiness no higher can my soul
Conceive or covet in her wildest dreams,
And naught beside can ever satisfy, —
Yet do I spurn it all, ere owe it to
Your pity or your penitence. This is
The resolution of my struggling heart.
If thou hadst, Rudiger, come to me as
My true and loyal lover, — were the past
With its dark, fearful memories forgot, —
Hadst thou but torn thy heart from all its graves,
And in this present now couldst live, and on
This present rest thy future, — if thy love
Were not forever buried in *one* grave, —
And if thou couldst disclaim those sentiments
Of pity and of duty, — I would cast
All pride, or memory of my wrong away,
And hail thee home my glad heart's rightful lord!
What were my joy!
Ah! eloquent heart, thou hast
Voiced thy petition in unguarded phrase!
But so well know I that your love is not
And never was, and never can be mine,
That I may say securely to you, seek
Me now within the hour if you can come,
As only I would take you, *wholly mine;*
But else ne'er see me more.

I do enjoin
Thee else to leave this place forever; and
Dwell henceforth far from me, where I may ne'er
See, hear, nor know, aught of thee.
Do not think
Again to blind me, — for you could not, — if
You came dissembling, in your pity, I
Should read the truth ere you could utter word.
'Twould be the bitterest deceit; yes, the
Most deadly insult, and the foulest wrong,
Should you again seek to delude me. — No!
I fear it not. Upon your penitence
I charge you, then, ne'er see me more but as
I have enjoined you, Rudiger.
In heaven
Not she who simply loved you best, — but she
Who loved you *first* and best, and whom
Your heart acknowledges, will claim you. I
Come not between you and Sybilla there.

"My dreaded task is ended now, — but ere
Communication 'twixt us twain be closed
Forever, take thou, from her heart of hearts,
The pardon and farewell of
Adelaide."

He read the scroll with sinking heart, then fell
Upon his knees in contrite agony.

"Poor, desolate, proud heart," he murmured, "bent

And broken by my crime, to God
I do commit thee in thy lonely grief.
Thou'rt right; I dare dissimulate no more.
Farewell, forever!"
Fervently he prayed,
Then rose, and ere an hour was far from thence.

She sat with flushed cheeks, hoping 'gainst all hope,
Until the sun went down; yet still she sat,
With whitening lips, and eyes that caught each shade
Of evening as it gathered in the west.
But twilight came on gently, and then hope
Set, too, forever.
Paler still she grew,
And cold and passive; looking as if all
Her soul were concentrated in one thought.
The vesper-bells struck out. She slowly rose
And sought the church as yesternight, a shade
More white, but otherwise unaltered to
The close watch of a hundred curious eyes.
Her head in prayer was bowed long, and her heart
Went up in the low cry, "Grant us thy peace!"

VIII.

As to its high and lonely eyrie back
The eagle vaults on eager mounting wing,
Who in earth's vapors for a day has strayed;
So swoops the soul back which has ventured down
From its lone heights of thought and intellect
Into the fogs of sin and misery:
Alit upon its towering peak it sits,
And broods in contemplation lone and rapt:
And so the mind of Rudiger returned
To studiousness with keen avidity.
Among devout and pious men, whose work
Was one of earnest, patient ministry
In the uncleanest haunts of sin and shame,
He labored on in expiation of
The crime that had disfigured all his youth.
Hard study and hard labor both were his.
All day he taught and preached, and prayed and toiled,
And ministered to souls and bodies of
The doers and the victims of all crimes
In which the abodes of sin and shame abound.

At night he pored until near daybreak o'er
Th' complexities of theologic lore.

He now redressed his early fallacy,—
That which exalts mind high above all else,
And makes the combat for the world's applause
The highest heroism of a life.
He fathomed now the mighty truth that Love, —
Love, the sole axis on which earth is swung, —
Is the prime essence of the Deity,
And Intellect subservient to Love;
And that true glory is to serve, and bleed
If need be, in Love's blessed cause; and that
Love's triumphs and Love's honors are life's best,
Her service noblest, sweetest; her reward
Completed joy, and an immortal crown.

The years rolled on, and to the brotherhood,
With whom dwelt Rudiger, there came a call,
From o'er the ocean, for their order's aid
In a far field deplorably debased.

Devoted men were prayed for — zealots whom
Much deprivation and all sacrifice
Would neither hinder nor intimidate.
And Rudiger, the foremost volunteer,
Embarked upon the mission joyfully.
And thus he solved his life's deep mystery.

"To teach all men the everlasting truth,
The blest, eternal truth of perfect Love,
I will go forth. I'll preach it far and wide.
To earth's last threshold will I pierce my way,
And speak to all the dwellers there of Love.
Wherever men dwell in the tents of Hate, —
For Hate supplants Love in the camps of Sin, —
Uneasy wanderers upon the earth,
Far from, and knowing not, the rest of Love,
Will I repair and raise her banners there.
All earth shall ring with my proclaiming voice.
My heart's young hopes are forfeited to sin,
And never can my soul return to them;
Sin breathed on them with autumn breath, and changed
To leaden tints, and shades of russet brown,
The green and golden hues of early dreams;
Sin snatched the costliest jewel of my life,
That shed the golden glamour o'er my youth,
In its foul greedy maw, and bore it off.
Like the base, doltish fisherman who bolts
With sensual greed the savory mussel, and
Drops with the shell the perfect pearl, I seized
The tempting morsel of Ambition's bait,

And past recall lost love's divine repast.
Henceforth to Love my life I dedicate, —
God's Love, including every human phase, —
And never shall my tongue be silenced in
This mission till the grave doth stay my feet.
Accept, great Power, my wrecked life's sacrifice,
Accept, Eternal King, thy Votary.

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